Strategic Culture and British Grand Strategy 1945-1952

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DECLARATION

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Abstract: The thesis explores the concept of strategic culture and applies it to British grand strategy between 1945-1952. Strategic culture refers to the beliefs, attitudes and values held by a particular group regarding the use of force, and asserts that these are shaped by the group's distinctive historical experience, geographical setting and political organisation. The thesis first describes the origins of strategic culture, locates it within the strategic studies literature and argues that it should be investigated further. It proceeds to survey the strategic culture literature, showing in detail the uses to which strategic culture has been put, categorising the work done so far, and identifying its strengths and weaknesses and the areas needing refinement. The next stage is a survey of the literature on political culture, a concept with a familial resemblance to strategic culture, with the aim of developing understanding of how strategic culture can be used and studied. In the light of this the strategic culture literature is reassessed and a framework and methodology for the study of strategic culture is proposed. The framework is then used to draw up a profile of the salient aspects of British strategic culture. The beliefs, attitudes and values described are then applied to a case study with a view to determining what conclusions can be drawn about their effect on British strategic policy during the early post-war years. The conclusion summarises the argument, and assesses the utility of the concept of strategic culture. The conclusion also locates strategic culture within the wider intellectual frameworks of security studies, International Politics and the human sciences more generally, suggesting what it might learn from these. Finally it suggests how the study of strategic culture should proceed in the future.

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Strategy will never be an exact science,
but that is no reason why it should remain a primitive art.

Ken Booth.

Introduction: Thesis Aims and Objectives

The subject of this thesis is the concept of strategic culture. Strategic culture, a term coined by the political scientist Jack Snyder in 1977, refers to the values, beliefs and attitudes held within different groups regarding the use and threat of force.[1] The concept involves three main propositions. The first is that different collectivities have distinct beliefs, attitudes and values regarding the use and threat of force. The second is that these beliefs, attitudes and values are shaped by the unique geographical setting and historical development of the group, especially in the strategic and political fields. The final proposition is that the strategic debates and behaviour of the group will be affected by its distinctive strategic culture.

What led Snyder to coin this new term was the concern that Western, and especially US, academic strategic studies had not always paid sufficient attention to national cultural variations. Specifically, he believed that US nuclear strategy was based on the assumption that strategists in the Soviet Union thought about nuclear weapons in the same way as strategists in the United States. If, however, because of the radically different histories and political cultures of the two countries, their defence decision-makers had arrived at quite different nuclear strategies, then US policy in a vital area was misguided.

[1] Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica: RAND Report R-2154-AF, 1977).

Nor is Snyder alone in making such observations. The lack of comparative strategic studies and the neglect of area studies by strategists are weaknesses within the sub-field of strategic studies to which others have drawn attention.[2] They complain that approaches which presuppose that 'rational strategic man' calculates the defence policies of states, or which waive altogether consideration of the intentions of policy-makers, preferring the more straightforward assessment of military capabilities, provide only limited understanding of activity in the strategic realm. This belief has prompted various scholars, prominent among whom are Ken Booth and Colin Gray, to take up the term 'strategic culture'.[3] These scholars believe that comprehension of the distinctive strategic beliefs and values of a particular group will enhance our understanding of its strategic discourses and debates. It will also be of use in explaining the group's behaviour in the strategic realm.

Furthermore, advocates of the study of strategic culture argue that analysis of cultural variations in thinking about force sheds light on strategic behaviour in ways that analysis based on the neo-realist approach - dominant within the discipline of International Politics - does not. Neo-realists assume that the self-help nature of the anarchic international system imposes a universal logic of action upon the states which comprise it. The internal workings of the states do not significantly affect their behaviour. The strategic culture approach asserts, to the contrary, that the cultural outlooks of states and other units do matter. Different groups will view the strategic world in different ways and may therefore act differently. Even for analysts who continue to accept one of the central

[2] On the lack of comparative strategic studies see Carol Leigh Rice, *Comparative Strategic Culture and the Use of Force, Space and Time in International Relations: Chinese Foreign Policy as Protracted War* (unpublished MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 1992), p. 33. On the neglect of area studies by strategists see Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979), especially pp. 147-52.

[3] See for instance Ken Booth, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed', in Carl G. Jacobsen, (ed), *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990); and Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986). A full list of works on strategic culture is included in the bibliography.

tenets of neo-realism - that conflict, sometimes leading to war, is inevitable in the anarchic system[4] - the study of strategic culture can be important in preparing states to defend themselves and protect their interests. If war cannot be avoided, then knowing the enemy's idiosyncrasies in the use of force may be crucial to military success. If security is to be maintained and potential enemies are to be deterred from aggression, then understanding what hostile states fear and respect is important.

The strategic culture approach is also of interest to those who believe that, while conflicts of interest do arise between states, such conflicts need not always lead to war. Understanding the distinctive strategic preoccupations and fears of other states could be of use not only in prevailing against them, but in learning to live with them. If it is accepted that violent conflicts often result from, or are prolonged unnecessarily by, mutual misunderstanding of the parties involved, then comprehension of strategic cultures could contribute to the development of strategies for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Escaping security dilemmas and building security communities ought to be aided by sensitivity to the differing views on security and the particular concerns of different groups. If the root of the security dilemma is seen as the 'unresolvable uncertainty' in the minds of state leaders as to whether the intentions of other states are defensive or offensive, then an approach which focuses not on the military capabilities of states but on their strategic beliefs and values offers some hope of insight into intentions and potential easing of 'Hobbesian fear'.[5]

[4] See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: a theoretical analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 159.

[5] On security dilemmas and communities, see Nicholas J. Wheeler and Ken Booth, 'The Security Dilemma', in John Baylis and N.J. Rengger, (eds), *Dilemmas of World Politics: International Issues in a Changing World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), especially pp. 30-34.

However, investigation of strategic culture promises even more dramatic results. Implicit in the concept is the possibility that attitudes to the use of force are the products not of the nature of the international system, nor of the nature of human beings, but rather that they are shaped by specific historical experiences of peoples at particular times and in particular places. War is a cultural phenomenon. It is a learned activity and so it may be unlearned. Awareness of its cultural bases may be the first step in the process of unlearning it.[6] Thus strategic culture holds out the possibility of change.

Hence the case for pursuing the study of strategic culture is that the strategic behaviour of states or other units cannot adequately be understood only by reference to the nature of the international system or to notions of a universal strategic rationality. It is necessary also to examine the unique cultural beliefs of the different units if we are to comprehend their behaviour. It has been argued, however, that the concept of strategic culture remains an immature one. How strategic culture is to be studied, and exactly what explanatory work it does, remain unclear. Moreover, the focus of empirical studies has been largely on the superpowers and China. The concept is therefore in need of both 'empirical flesh and theoretical shine'.[7] The overarching aim of this thesis is to further the development of the concept by providing it with additional 'empirical flesh and theoretical shine' and by embedding the concept in the wider academic literatures. This is achieved in a number of stages. Chapter One sets the scene by first introducing the concept of strategic culture and describing its origins in much greater depth than in this Introduction. It then investigates the extent to which culture has been ignored and the extent to which it has been included in the study of strategy, and locates strategic culture within the wider

[6] On war as a cultural phenomenon, see Ken Booth, 'War, Security and Strategy: towards a doctrine for stable peace', in Ken Booth, (ed), *New Thinking About Strategy and International Security* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 354-55.

[7] On strategic culture's need for 'empirical flesh and theoretical shine', see Booth, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed', p. 126.

academic literature of strategic studies. This chapter provides a useful context for Chapter Two, which contains the most thorough and up-to-date survey of the literature on strategic culture yet undertaken. The objectives here are to gather together all that has been written on the subject and to compare the various approaches. As well as conveying the flavour of these approaches the chapter will make a preliminary assessment of their strengths and weaknesses and identify the outstanding issues raised by the study of cultural factors in strategy and the areas of the concept which require further work. Particularly important questions which emerge are: how can strategic culture be studied? Which methods should be employed? How should strategic culture be defined? In what ways does it affect strategic behaviour?

In order to refine the concept and add 'theoretical shine', the thesis turns to a survey of the literature on political culture. Reference is often made to political culture in writing about strategic culture. Political culture is a long-established concept in political science. Defined as the 'values, beliefs, and emotions that give meaning to political behaviour', political culture is seen as a closely related concept to strategic culture.[8] The methods by which it has been studied should thus yield lessons for strategic culture. However, strategic culture scholars have yet to bring the insights of political culture systematically to bear on their theorising about strategic culture. Chapter Three does so.

Chapter Four revisits the strategic culture literature in order to make a more thorough assessment of it in the light of the findings of the previous chapter. That accomplished, a framework and a methodology for proceeding with the study of strategic culture are outlined, drawing on the political culture literature. Within both the political culture and strategic culture literatures, there is a significant division between those who

[8] Dennis Kavanagh, *British Politics: Continuities and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, second edition, 1990), p. 49.

employ a positivist methodology and those who prefer a more interpretive one. The thesis opts for the latter in Chapter Four.

Attention then turns to the case study chapters. Chapter Five applies the concept of strategic culture in a concerted manner for the first time to the United Kingdom. The profile of British strategic culture drawn up in this chapter is the most comprehensive description of the key elements of British beliefs and values about the use of force yet attempted. Chapter Six then applies the concept of strategic culture to British strategic policy in the 1945-1952 period. This is a crucial period in British strategic history. It is framed at one end by the conclusion of the Second World War with the dropping of the first atomic weapons, and at the other by the completion of the British Global Strategy Paper, one of the most famous British defence documents of the post-war years.[9] The Global Strategy Paper set out the British response to the advent of nuclear weapons and the ideas it contained continue to inform British defence policy today. The 1945-1952 period has yet to be subjected to a concerted and explicit strategic cultural analysis. It is therefore appropriate in the search for 'empirical flesh' to turn to this period.

The Conclusion sums up the findings of the thesis and assesses the value of strategic culture in the light of the case study chapters. What does strategic culture tell us about British grand strategy, and what does the case study of British grand strategy tell us about the utility of strategic culture? Research into strategic culture is located within the wider spheres of International Politics and the human sciences more broadly. Parallels are drawn with work in other areas, and suggestions are offered as to how strategic culture research might develop in the future. A recurrent theme in the thesis is the division

[9] See John Baylis and Alan Macmillan, 'The British Global Strategy Paper of 1952', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (June 1993), pp. 200-26.

between interpretivist and positivist approaches to the study of culture. The Conclusion relates this division to the wider post-positivist debate in International Politics.

By thoroughly surveying the strategic culture literature and embedding it within the wider literatures of strategic studies and International Politics, by developing the concept through establishing the link with political culture, by applying it to fresh empirical material and by enriching existing accounts of British post-war defence policy, it is hoped that the thesis constitutes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge.

Conclusion

Strategic culture is still a fairly new and underdeveloped concept. Various problems attend enquiries into such new areas. Sidney Verba notes 'an unfortunate tendency in the social sciences to oversell new concepts and to assume that the mere labeling of an old phenomenon with a new term represents a breakthrough in our understanding'.[10] It is important to recognise that this is not so. Much work remains to be done, to demonstrate how and to what degree strategic culture is significant. It is important also not to overemphasise its importance relative to other variables. Nathan Leites writes of the 'frequent fallacy in the human sciences to believe that, if somebody at a certain moment talks about the importance of factor A, he is running down the importance of factors B, C...'.[11] To investigate strategic culture on the grounds that it has sometimes been neglected and not always studied explicitly and wisely when interest has been shown, is not to argue that it is necessarily more important than other approaches.

[10] Sidney Verba, 'Conclusion', in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, (eds), *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 515.
[11] Nathan Leites, 'Psychocultural Hypotheses about Political Acts', *World Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October 1948), p. 107.

As will be shown, when political culture appeared on the scene in the 1950s and 1960s, it was seized upon as the answer to a number of problems. It could explain why the governments of newly independent states were often unstable, although their political systems had often been copied from stable Western democracies: the political beliefs of the population differed from those of the West and could not support democracy. Political culture was even seen as potentially able to bridge the micro-macro gap: to reconcile the relationship of the attitudes of individuals and the operation of the political system as a whole. This was the Holy Grail of political science, equivalent in physics to reconciling the operation of quantum mechanics and relativity. There was profound disappointment when the Grail was not found. If we are careful not to ask too much of strategic culture, we can avoid disappointment when it does not deliver as much as we had hoped.

If there can be a tendency to see new concepts as the answer to all our questions, there can be an opposite and conservative tendency to find fault with the new, to highlight its weaknesses and to stick to familiar approaches. Familiarity breeds complacency, and we can forget about the weaknesses of existing approaches. Therefore the aim is not to overplay the weaknesses of strategic culture, but to attempt a balanced appreciation of its strengths and weaknesses, of what it can and cannot do. It does have weaknesses, and it does not promise all the answers, but it is unlikely that it will go away. No-one writing about German security policy would ignore the effect of the weight of history. If you want to understand German reluctance to commit armed forces during contemporary crises, you will look at German experience of war. Similarly, who would discuss Israeli security policy without reference to the Diaspora, the Holocaust, and earlier pogroms? Israeli attitudes to security are surely affected by the history of the Jews. Security from physical attack is bound to loom large in the calculations of a people so grievously sinned against in the past. For the Japanese, the only nation to have nuclear weapons

used in war against them, history also shapes attitudes towards the use of force. Acquiring nuclear weapons, well within Japan's technological grasp, is especially problematic for the Japanese. The use of force more generally raises difficulties for the Japanese also, as for the Germans. If you want to understand Kamikaze attacks by the Japanese during World War Two, you will look into their society and values. All these things are the stuff of strategic culture.

These are also factors which inhabit what Michael Howard calls the shadowy regions of international politics. Howard recounts the story of '...the drunk who lost his watch in a dark alley but was found looking for it under a lamp post because there was more light there'. He comments that

> the light provided by our knowledge of technological capabilities and our capacity for sophisticated strategic analysis is so dazzling as to be almost hypnotic; but it is in those shadowy regions of human understanding based on our knowledge of social development, cultural diversity and patterns of behaviour that we have to look for the answers.[12]

Strategic behaviour may more easily be studied and apparently neatly explained in terms of action-reaction cycles or structural imperatives, but to leave culture out of the picture because its significance is held to be more difficult to prove or measure may be to forgo a potentially rich vein of analysis.

As will be shown, journalists, faced with lower standards of proof than academics, find the subject amenable. However, for academics it is all too easy to be disappointed with the results of the study of culture. It is appropriate to end this introduction with the words of Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist who has written widely on culture, which should temper over-optimism:

[12] Michael Howard, 'The Future of Deterrence', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Vol. 131, No. 2 (June 1986), p. 10.

> Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is. It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right.[13]

This is not to argue, of course, that strategic culture research is not worth doing.

[13] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana, 1993), p. 29.

Chapter One: Culture and Strategy

'Know your enemy and know yourself: in a hundred battles you will never be in peril'. This was the advice, more than 2000 years ago, of the Chinese military philosopher Sun Zi.[1] In the West, that you should 'know your enemy' is also recognised as a cardinal military principle. It is a principle, however, that strategists have often failed to observe. This at least was the argument advanced by Jack Snyder, in the course of a RAND report published in 1977.[2] Snyder's subject was the development by the United States of a strategy of limited nuclear operations. The objective of this strategic concept was to prevent the leadership of the United States from being forced into rapid escalation to all-out nuclear war in the event of nuclear deterrence breaking down. This was to be achieved by providing a wide range of pre-planned, limited nuclear strike options. Moreover, possession by the United States of a flexible range of nuclear attack options would serve to strengthen deterrence by assuring the Soviet Union that the United States could respond appropriately to any level of aggression which the Soviet Union might undertake.

To the government of the United States, this policy made sound strategic sense. The key question which Snyder addressed in his report, however, was whether the policy would make sense to the leadership of the Soviet Union. It was imperative that it did: the success of limited nuclear operations required the Soviet Union as well as the United States to exercise restraint in its use of nuclear weapons, should war break out. It would be futile for the United States to limit nuclear attacks if the Soviet Union

[1] Samuel B. Griffith's translation of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 84. (Sun Zi is the more modern transliteration of Sun Tzu).
[2] Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica: RAND Report R-2154-AF, 1977).

did not do likewise, and dangerous to plan on the erroneous assumption that nuclear use could be initiated without precipitating holocaust. Yet ascertaining the exact nature of strategic thinking and doctrine in a closed society like the Soviet Union was a complicated task. As a result, Snyder believed, strategists in the United States had tended to rely on calculations of what a generic, 'rational strategic man' would do, rather than investigating what 'Soviet man' would do. Nuclear weapons, it was assumed, imposed a logic of action on those who possessed them. If strategists in the Soviet Union did not already share US thinking on nuclear deterrence and war-fighting, it could therefore be expected that they would come to do so as soon as they worked out the logic of the nuclear predicament.

Snyder challenged this expectation. 'Abstract, armchair strategy' could not, he argued, yield a full enough understanding of how the Soviet Union would respond to the onset of nuclear war to serve as a basis for policy.[3] The attempt had to be made to discover what thinking among Soviet strategists actually was with regard to the use of nuclear weapons. Crucially, this was more than a matter merely of determining the essentials of Soviet *policy*. It involved digging deeper than that, because, Snyder wrote,

> Soviet and American doctrines have developed in different organizational, historical, and political contexts, and in response to different situational and technological constraints. As a result, the Soviets and Americans have asked somewhat different questions about the use of nuclear weapons and have developed answers that differ in significant respects.[4]

For example, the experience of the United States in the Korean and Vietnam wars, and the dilemma which had confronted NATO over whether to initiate the use of nuclear weapons, given perceived conventional inferiority, had given US strategists incentives to consider issues of limitation in war. Their Soviet counterparts had no such incentives. The different circumstances and experiences of the USA and the USSR had shaped in each a distinctive 'set of general beliefs, attitudes and behavioral patterns with regard to nuclear

[3] *Ibid*, p. 4.
[4] *Ibid*, p. *v*.

strategy'. Strategists in the United States and the Soviet Union were not 'culture-free, preconception-free game theorists', but were socialised into holding these distinctive beliefs, which thereby 'achieved a state of semi-permanence that places them on the level of "culture" rather than mere "policy"'.[5]

Lacking a label for this phenomenon, Snyder minted a new one: strategic culture. This he defined as

> the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy.[6]

Snyder suggested that the section of his report elaborating this concept might be its 'most useful and durable part', and so it has proved. From the vantage point of the post-Cold War world, discussions of the limited nuclear war planning carried out in the Soviet Union and the United States provoke only historical interest. The concept of strategic culture, on the other hand, has exhibited a more enduring appeal. Since 1977 a small literature has accumulated around this concept and continues to grow. Strategic culture has been the subject of books, journal articles, and postgraduate theses.[7] It has been discussed at academic workshops and conferences.[8] That the major journal *International Security* should devote part of an issue in 1995 to the question, 'Does Strategic Culture Matter?', both underlines and further enhances its increasingly high profile.[9]

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[5] *Ibid*, pp. *v* and 7.
[6] *Ibid*, p. 8.
[7] A full list can be found in the bibliography. Many of these works will be discussed below.
[8] These include a workshop on strategic culture organised by the American Academy of Sciences in May 1990; a workshop on 'Strategic Culture and China' held at the Contemporary History Institute, Ohio University, in March 1992; and a workshop on 'Conflict Resolution and Strategic Culture in the Asia-Pacific Region', held at Langkawi Island, Malaysia, August 1994.
[9] *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Spring 1995) contained the following articles under the heading 'Does Strategic Culture Matter?': Stephen Peter Rosen, 'Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters', pp. 5-31; Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture', pp. 32-64; and Elizabeth Kier, 'Culture and Military Doctrine: France Between the Wars', pp. 65-93.

Moreover, the term 'strategic culture' has seeped gradually into the vocabulary of strategic and security studies. Not only is more being written about strategic culture, with the result that producing a definitive bibliography is a more demanding task now than it was a few years ago; but the term is increasingly dropped casually into analysis, and employed as one among a number of approaches, whereas previously it was used more self-consciously, accompanied by much discussion of the concept and forming the main focus of the piece in which it appeared. Rough acquaintance with the concept is more likely to be assumed now than ten or even five years ago.[10]

Notwithstanding the increased attention paid to strategic culture, it is not familiar to all those who study war and peace. Seyom Brown illustrates this point in the second edition of his book *The Causes and Prevention of War*, when he writes that he has 'coined the term *culture of war* to denote how countries' belief systems affect their use of military force'.[11] That Brown felt the need to coin a term to cover cultural factors underscores their importance. However, that he was unaware that the term 'strategic culture' exists and denotes the phenomenon he describes shows that this term is not yet as well known as it might be. Moreover, as will be argued in the following chapter, strategic culture remains an underdeveloped and contested concept. There is no consensus on how it should be studied, and there are differences of opinion on the value of studying it.

As noted in the Introduction, this thesis seeks to explore strategic culture and to build up its profile further. The aim is to add 'empirical flesh and theoretical shine' to the concept, and to assess its utility.[12] However, it is worth questioning at the outset Jack

[10] One example of the casual use of the term is by Ian Clark and Nicholas J. Wheeler, who refer to the 'British strategic nuclear culture', without elaborating on it, in *The British Origins of Nuclear Strategy 1945-1955* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1989), p. 176. An example of the employment of strategic culture as merely one analytical tool amongst others is Bates Gill, in 'North-East Asia and multilateral security institutions', in *SIPRI Yearbook 1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 149-53.

[11] Seyom Brown, *The Causes and Prevention of War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, second edition, 1994), p. 100.

[12] On strategic culture's need for 'empirical flesh and theoretical shine', see Ken Booth, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed', in Carl G. Jacobsen, (ed), *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 126.

Snyder's central premise: that history and culture had been left out of strategy. Colin Gray has commented that Snyder and others who initiated the study of strategic culture had discovered the obvious. Strategists had, deep down, known all along that culture and history shaped strategy, Gray wrote.[13] Because the term itself was coined only in 1977 does not mean that the ideas which comprise strategic culture were not around long before. Is the development of strategic culture a case of pouring old wine into new bottles? The bulk of this introductory chapter will be given over to an examination of the place of culture in thinking about strategy and an attempt to locate strategic culture within the wider strategic literature.

As preparation for asking whether and to what extent strategic culture and its associated ideas were and continue to be ignored by strategic commentators, both during the Cold War and beyond it, let us recap briefly the nature of the concept. Definitions of strategic culture vary, but the literature on the concept is broadly in agreement that it involves three main propositions.[14] The first is that different groups possess distinct and enduring sets of beliefs, attitudes and values regarding the threat and use of force. The second is that this distinctiveness is shaped by the unique historical experience of the group in its particular geographic setting and given its particular internal political organisation. The final proposition is that these beliefs and attitudes in some way affect the strategic behaviour of the group. How far have these propositions guided enquiry into the strategic behaviour of states and other units, and how far have they been neglected?

Culture and Strategic Studies

Prior to the Second World War, strategy was not widely taught at universities nor studied in an academic fashion. Though much was written about war, it tended to come from the pens of professional soldiers and to constitute either 'how to do it' guides for the efficient

[13] Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986), pp. 33-34.
[14] This point will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter where the strategic culture literature is surveyed.

prosecution of combat, or histories of particular battles.[15] Much of this writing, from Sun Zi and Machiavelli through to Clausewitz and Jomini, is still read today, but the bulk of the serious academic treatment of strategy dates from 1945.[16]

It was the advent of atomic and later thermonuclear weapons which took the study of strategy out of the hands of generals and onto the syllabuses of universities. The post-war period is the era of the civilian, academic strategist, grappling with the problems raised by nuclear weapons. Out of such grappling in the 1950s and early 1960s came a body of literature which set the framework for the study of nuclear strategy and which provided the conceptual apparatus and vocabulary still widely used at least until the end of the Cold War. Deterrence, crisis management, limited war and other phrases were coined and popularised by the likes of Bernard Brodie, Thomas Schelling, Herman Kahn and Henry Kissinger, in what is often referred to as the 'golden age' of strategic thinking.[17]

The mid-1960s witnessed a reaction against the 'golden age' literature. Among the best-known critics of the civilian strategists in this period were Anatol Rapoport and Philip Green, who complained of serious shortcomings in the strategic studies literature.[18] Often the backgrounds of the strategists themselves were at the root of the problem. Schelling and Kahn in particular were taken to task. Respectively an economist and a physicist, these strategists brought to bear on the problems of the nuclear age the analytical tools of their own disciplines. Especially important were game theory and systems analysis. Whatever insight these approaches generated - and some would argue they were very fruitful for the generation of theory[19] - their drawbacks were spelled out by the critics.

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[15] The term 'how to do it' guide is taken from Bernard Brodie, 'Why Were We So (Strategically) Wrong?', *Foreign Policy*, No. 5 (Winter 1971-72), p. 151.

[16] See John Garnett, 'Strategic Studies and Its Assumptions', in John Baylis *et al*, *Contemporary Strategy*, Vol. 1, *Theories and Concepts* (London: Croom Helm, second, revised edition, 1987), p. 7.

[17] For more details see Ken Booth, 'The Evolution of Strategic Thinking', in *ibid*, pp. 44-53.

[18] See Philip Green, *Deadly Logic: The Theory of Nuclear Deterrence* (Ohio: Ohio State University, 1966); Anatol Rapoport, *Strategy and Conscience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); and Rapoport's *Introduction* to Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

[19] For example, John Garnett defends the contribution of Schelling and Kahn, and also argues that the importance of game theory and systems analysis to their thinking was overstated by critics. See Garnett, pp. 14-27.

These included the abstract nature of the writing, the assumption of rationality in actors, and the neglect of history and politics. These strategists by and large had no training in or detailed knowledge of history, especially strategic history. Nor had they any expert understanding of the history and politics of different countries, and in particular the Soviet Union. They therefore left historical and national cultural factors out of their analysis, assuming instead that a universal and timeless rationality was at work.

The deficiencies highlighted by Snyder in his RAND report had therefore been observed many years earlier. Indeed the first to criticise the reliance in the strategic studies literature upon 'rational strategic man' appears to have been Hedley Bull. As early as 1961, Bull noted the assumption in military studies of 'the "rational action" of a kind of "strategic man", a man who on further acquaintance reveals himself as a university professor of unusual intellectual subtlety'.[20] Ten years later, Bull again summed up the problem which Snyder would tackle in his RAND report. The flaw in much strategic writing, he wrote in an Adelphi Paper, was

> the attempt, in interpreting the actions of countries, to substitute the question 'what would it be rational for them to do?', as answered in terms of some hypothetical 'Strategic Man' (drawn from American experience, as 'Economic Man' in the classical economics was drawn from English experience), for the question 'what do they do?', answered in terms of historical and political observation.[21]

Snyder's recommendation that strategists should investigate the nature of 'Soviet strategic man' and his nuclear thinking had also been advanced earlier. To select but one instance, in 1971 Lawrence Caldwell argued the need, rather than simply labelling it 'totalitarian', to see the Soviet Union as a functioning political system 'with its own history, separate political culture and particular structures': to see it in its own terms. If they did so, strategists in the West would be far better equipped to comprehend Soviet behaviour

[20] Hedley Bull, *The Control of the Arms Race: Disarmament and Arms Control in the Missile Age* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), p. 48.
[21] Hedley Bull, 'The Scope for Soviet-American Agreement', in *Adelphi Paper No. 65, Soviet-American Relations and World Order: Arms Limitations and Policy* (London: IISS, 1970), p. 13.

during the SALT process. Caldwell went on to stress that the perception one state had of another 'depends heavily on its particular cultural and strategic outlook'.[22]

That it is possible to pick out instances of commentators making a point similar to Snyder's suggests an awareness of the need for consideration of culture, but also confirms that insufficient attention was paid to it. Dissatisfaction with the strategic studies literature in this regard appeared to be mounting during the 1970s. It was in this context that Snyder's paper appeared. But although Snyder coined the term strategic culture, he did not himself take it forward with enthusiasm. Indeed, he has written a notable critique of strategic culture and the uses to which it has been put by others.[23] It is these others who have latched on to the term strategic culture and popularised it. One such is Colin Gray, whose work on strategic culture brought it to the attention of many other scholars.[24] Snyder coined the term, then, and Gray publicised it. Intellectually, however, the term fits the work of another group of scholars who had been increasingly unhappy with the direction of Western academic strategic studies in the 1960s and 1970s. In particular, the work of scholars brought together by Mike MccGwire at Dalhousie University for a series of seminars on Soviet naval strategy in the early 1970s deserves mention. These scholars were concerned to understand how the Soviet Navy thought about the world and the use of naval force, in order to explain what was seen often in the West as irrational behaviour on the part of the Soviet Union.[25]

One of those scholars was Ken Booth, whose major examination of the culture-bound and the culture-blind nature of strategic studies was published in 1979.[26] *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* has come to be seen as one of the most important books written on

[22] Lawrence Caldwell, *Adelphi Paper No. 75, Soviet Attitudes to SALT* (London: IISS, 1971, pp. 1-2.
[23] Jack Snyder, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor', in Jacobsen.
[24] In particular see Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style.*
[25] On the MccGwire seminars see for example Michael MccGwire, (ed), *Soviet Naval Developments: Capability and Context* (New York: Praeger, 1973).
[26] Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979).

strategy.[27] While Jack Snyder will always be associated with strategic culture, because he coined the term, his discussion of it occupied only a few pages. Written without knowledge of Snyder's work, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* was a much more intensive investigation into the role of culture in strategy. The aim of the book was to breed greater awareness in present and more importantly future generations of strategists of the capacity of the 'fog of culture' to interfere in the making and the study of strategy. Specifically, Booth sought to raise consciousness of the danger of ethnocentrism: the tendency of societies to perceive others through their own frame of reference, leading to distorted views and often the feeling of superiority. Strategists, Booth argued, were especially guilty of the sins of ethnocentrism.[28] His book catalogues occasions when ethnocentric thinking in one form or another resulted in poor strategy, practically and theoretically. With regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, for example, Booth argued that ethnocentrism contributed to Egypt's poor performance in the 1967 war. In particular, 'the Arab sense of superiority and the alien nature of Israel' hindered a proper appreciation of the enemy. By the 1973 war, some lessons had been learned by the Egyptians, who gave more thought to the type of enemy they confronted, and consequently fared better. They were helped by the ethnocentrism of the Israelis. 'Israeli feelings of superiority, the culture-bound character of Israeli thinking and the Israelis' habit of projecting their own assumptions on the Arabs' militated against accurate threat assessment. The Israelis themselves, had they been in the shoes of the Egyptians, would not have considered initiating hostilities, for the balance of forces was insufficient to guarantee success. They assumed therefore that Egypt would not attack them. However, the humiliation felt by the Egyptians after defeat in 1967 was a motivating factor in their decision to attack Israel in 1973 which the Israelis were not sensitive to.[29]

[27] For instance, Colin Gray described *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* as a path-breaking study 'which dignified and elevated insight to the level of principle'. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, p. 34.
[28] Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, especially pp. 9-21.
[29] *Ibid*, pp. 52-54.

If they were to produce better strategy, Booth advised, strategists would need to think in terms of cultural relativism, to appreciate the existence of distinct cultures and seek to see the world through their eyes. They would need to avoid crude stereotypes. They would need to replace 'rational strategic man' with 'national strategic man', to avoid seeing peoples as 'driven by a universal political and strategic logic'.[30] To do so a more interdisciplinary approach would be needed, with greater emphasis on history, culture, social psychology and area studies.[31] Booth did not offer a theory of strategic culture, nor set an agenda for the study of the subject. What he did do, however, was to provide a much broader basis for the study of culture and strategy than Snyder. Thus between them Snyder and Booth came up with the name, impetus and intellectual justification for the study of strategic culture. What has given strategic culture its staying power is that it seemed to many strategists to express the concerns about the ahistorical and acultural nature of strategic studies scholarship which had been bubbling under and occasionally breaking the surface of the subject.

Those who have pressed for the study of strategic culture would not claim to have come up with a brand new set of ideas. However, to say that consideration of culture was not wholly absent from strategic studies is not to say that much concerted attention was paid to it either. Providing a label under which work on culture could be gathered presented the opportunity to raise its profile and focus more interest upon it. It has encouraged further work on the same theme and provided a heading under which related ideas can be grouped. Let us now examine some of these related ideas.

Strategic culture by other names

Attention to cultural factors in strategy can frequently be found outside of the 'golden age' strategic studies literature. For example, Edward Mead Earle's classic work, *Makers of*

[30] *Ibid*, p. 136.
[31] *Ibid*, pp. 139-42.

Modern Strategy, a collection of essays on strategic thinking from Machiavelli to Hitler, stressed the importance of national factors. In his introduction, Earle wrote that these 'frequently are the determining factors'. National differences could be traced to the different 'character and psychology of peoples'; to their different 'standards of value' and 'outlook on life'; and to their different 'political, social, and economic institutions'. But 'even more they are the political and military expression of geographical situation and national tradition. In any case, they are readily discernible'.[32] A much more recent collection of essays charting strategic behaviour from the Peloponnesian wars through to the nuclear age similarly lays stress upon the role of geography, history, culture and political organisation in shaping the strategic thinking of different groups.[33] A further example would be Ian Clark and Nicholas Wheeler's study of British nuclear strategy in its formative years. The authors use the term 'strategic culture' only once, and then with no elaboration. But in arguing that there was a distinctive British approach to nuclear strategy, influenced in part by Britain's historical experience, they could be said to be operating within that spirit.[34]

However, some writers have tread ground even closer to strategic culture. One example comes in the form of an article written in 1985 by Gerald Segal on the subject of 'defence culture'.[35] Inspired not by what had been written on strategic culture, but instead by the political culture literature, Segal examined the role of 'intangibles', or defence cultures, in Sino-Soviet military relations. He defined defence culture as 'the elite's perception of the fundamental and enduring components of defence policy', including the perception of the historical traditions of a state's defence policy. This perception was influenced by the state's human and physical geography and by the ideological stance

[32] Edward Mead Earle, (ed), *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. *x*.
[33] See Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, 'Introduction: On Strategy', in Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox and Alvin Bernstein, (eds), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
[34] Clark and Wheeler, especially chapter one. Strategic culture is referred to on p. 176.
[35] Gerald Segal, 'Defence Culture and Sino-Soviet Relations', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (June 1985), pp. 180-98.

of the regime. Finally, perceptions were shaped by the bureaucratic positions of those making up the elite. Strategic issues, Segal argued, would be 'filtered and refracted' through the prism of these perceptions.[36]

An elite's defence culture could well contain contradictory elements, Segal warned, and it was not static: it could change as elites and generations changed, and as new events occurred. Yet if these points complicated the study of defence culture, they did not make it any less important. Too much strategic analysis, Segal felt, overemphasised hardware and capabilities. It was necessary, to do justice to Sino-Soviet relations at least, to shift the focus towards intentions, and to do this attention had to be paid to defence cultures. In the remainder of the article Segal tried to show how Sino-Soviet *détente* had been affected by the defence cultural predispositions of the two states, rooted in their particular historical and geographical contexts.[37] For example, for *détente* to be achieved, each state needed to be confident that its military power was sufficient to secure its borders. Each state had a history of invasion and counter-invasion across long and vulnerable frontiers which affected the thinking of its elite on this issue: negotiation and compromise were believed possible only when substantial military power was present as insurance should the talks fail.[38]

Another tradition of strategic writing in apparently similar vein to defence culture and strategic culture dates back to the 1930s. This tradition, using the title 'way in warfare', is most closely associated with the British military commentator Captain Basil Liddell Hart. In 1931 Liddell Hart put forward the idea that there 'has been a distinctively British practice of war, based on experience and proved by three centuries of success'.[39] He referred to this as the British 'way in warfare'. This phrase has been taken up by a

[36] *Ibid*, p. 180.
[37] *Ibid*, p. 181.
[38] *Ibid*, p. 182.
[39] Basil H. Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare: Adaptability and Mobility* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1935), p. *v*.

variety of writers discussing the Soviet Union, China, the United States and Britain.[40] Studies of this sort can be categorised as strategic culture by another name, asserting as they do the existence of distinct national approaches to strategy. They are therefore worthy of some consideration.

Liddell Hart's argument was that the British way in warfare was an indirect one, making maximum use of the mobility and surprise which seapower could deliver. Naval forces were used to attack enemy overseas possessions and to blockade enemy ports, allowing Britain to triumph over its European competitors without committing ground troops to continental Europe. However, where strategic culture writing suggests that experience breeds enduring beliefs, Liddell Hart wrote that British experience in warfare had not led to strategic beliefs becoming ingrained in British minds. To the contrary, the British had ignored their own experience and opted instead for 'slavish imitation of Continental fashions'. The British decision to commit forces on a huge scale to the European mainland in World War One resulted from this 'slavish imitation' and led to disaster. In Liddell Hart's view, therefore, nations ought to be conscious of their histories, to know themselves, and to stick to what was 'natural' for them. Yet they could all too easily forget their pasts and be influenced by outside ideas. In this sense Liddell Hart was making the opposite point to many strategic culture scholars who stress the resistance to change of national ways of thinking.[41]

Liddell Hart has been criticised for misrepresenting British military history in order to support his argument that Britain should in future opt for a maritime strategy rather

[40] See William P. Baxter, *The Soviet Way of Warfare* (London: Brassey's, 1986); Frank A. Kierman and John K. Fairbank, (eds), *Chinese Ways in Warfare* (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1974); Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1973); Michael Howard, 'The British Way in Warfare: A Reappraisal', in Howard, *The Causes of Wars* (London: Unwin, 1984); David French, *The British Way in Warfare 1688-2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Colin McInnes, *Hot War, Cold War: The British Army's Way in Warfare 1945-95* (London: Brassey's, 1996); and Hew Strachan, 'The British Way in Warfare', in David Chandler, (ed), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
[41] Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare*, pp. *v* and 12-30.

than a continental commitment. He was using the idea of a British way in warfare as a polemical device. Later writers have pointed to the limitations of sea power as a means of achieving British strategic objectives. While sea power and Britain's island status could save it from defeat and guarantee its survival, they could not bring about victory. In fact, Britain had, historically, always committed troops to Europe when possible, and had relied only on purely naval strategies when there was no other choice. For Michael Howard, if a British way in warfare existed, it 'was the outcome of a continuous dialectic' between the maritime and continental schools.[42]

This illustrates the difficulty of pinning down what constitutes a nation's strategic culture or way in warfare, in sorting out the important from the unimportant historical events. It also shows how the historical record can be manipulated to fabricate a traditional way in warfare in order to advocate a particular policy. More pertinently, Liddell Hart was writing soon after World War One, and reflected the concerns of many of his generation who had lived through that conflict. Determined to prevent a repeat of the slaughter of the trenches, he searched British history for evidence that the continental commitment was 'unnatural', and paid little heed to evidence to the contrary. If he was ahead of his time, therefore, in discussing strategic cultural factors, Liddell Hart's treatment of the British case exposes him as a child of his time. Likewise, Michael Howard has speculated on whether, in his criticisms of Liddell Hart, he does not himself reflect a generation influenced especially by World War Two and the Cold War, which saw a continental commitment as crucial.[43]

There are two points to emphasise here. First, what distinguishes British strategic thinking may be not that it favours either a continental commitment or a maritime strategy, but that the strategic debate is framed in terms of a choice between these two options.

[42] Michael Howard, 'The British Way in Warfare: A Reappraisal', in Howard, *The Causes of Wars*, p. 193.
[43] Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The dilemma of British defence policy in the era of the two world wars* (London: The Ashfield Press, 1989 paperback edition), pp. 7-8.

Strategists are often seen to belong to one or other of these schools. This argument will be developed further later in the thesis. Second, which option is preferred may depend in large measure on recent experience, with the historical record being searched for evidence which supports that option. Thus the concerns of the present have considerable impact on how the past is viewed, as well as the past exerting influence on present thinking. This too must be borne in mind.

Liddell Hart urged statesmen to familiarise themselves with their own country's historical practices in order better to be able to formulate policy in the present. Other writers who have picked up the phrase 'way in warfare' have stressed the need to understand other states. In the case of the Soviet Union, the point of the exercise has been to enable Western statesmen to formulate more appropriate policies to deal with that state in the context of the Cold War. The most recent such book, by William Baxter, sets out to show how the Soviet military mind works, and to dispel the stereotypes surrounding it. It takes into consideration the different 'cultural, philosophical, and historical experiences that shape the values and beliefs' of Soviet and Western societies. Though using the title 'way in warfare' rather than strategic culture, and making no reference to the work on strategic culture, the approach shares a concern with ingrained national outlooks but focuses on more narrowly military matters rather than the grand strategic level. The book is rather keener on elucidating what current Soviet thinking is on specific military issues than developing conceptual knowledge of how history and culture influence current policy.[44]

More sophisticated analysis of the Soviet way of warfare came from Raymond Garthoff. In spirit if not in name, much of Garthoff's work also concerns ways in warfare or strategic cultures. Writing in 1958, Garthoff raised many of the concerns which twenty years later led Jack Snyder to coin the term 'strategic culture'. To understand the 'alien military culture' of the Soviet Union, he argued that it was first necessary to 'escape the

[44] Baxter, p. 5.

confines of one's own implicit and unconscious strategic concept'. Failure to do so would lead to distorted analysis, Garthoff wrote, and indeed much writing in the USA on Soviet strategy exhibited this fault. Garthoff tried to identify the key details of Soviet doctrine and strategic thought, relating them to 'geopolitical facts and historical tradition', as well as to resources and ideology. Garthoff also reflected upon the influence of foreign thinkers such as Clausewitz on Soviet strategic thought, and cautioned against assuming undue uniqueness in Soviet approaches.[45] This point is reinforced by Nathan Leites, writing on the Soviet style in war, who argued the need for comparative studies to avoid assuming distinctiveness where none exists.[46]

Work has also been done on the Chinese way in warfare. The volume of essays edited by Kierman and Fairbank takes as its starting point the view that 'the imprint of a specific geography and history [has] produced in China specific habits of mind and action'. In what was mainly a historical survey of Chinese military experience, various elements of Chinese habits of mind and action were drawn out. While the authors were keen to avoid the 'sinological fallacy' of asserting uniqueness where none exists, they did identify certain elements in Chinese strategic thinking which they claimed were distinctive. Amongst these were the reluctance of the Chinese to use force, their tendency to see the resort to war as a failure of policy, and their belief in the need for civil control of the military. It may be that present day concerns led to an undue emphasis on certain features, however: in the nuclear age, where it was hoped that states would not resort to the use of force, it was comforting to find traditions in Chinese thinking which promoted the view that Chinese nuclear forces were in safe hands.[47] Indeed, more recently Alastair Johnston has written that much of the literature on Chinese strategic policy posits the existence of a distinctively Chinese approach to the use of force, rooted in Chinese history and culture.[48]

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[45] Raymond L. Garthoff, *Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age* (London: Atlantic/Stevens, 1958), pp. *xi* and 11.
[46] Nathan Leites, *Soviet Style in War* (New York: Crane Russak, 1982), p. *xv*.
[47] Kierman and Fairbank, especially pp. 1 and 25-26.
[48] For an overview of the literature, see Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 22-27.

Johnston finds this distinctiveness overdrawn. Analysts have, he believes, committed the 'sinological fallacy', ignoring the similarities between Chinese strategic thinking and that of other states, and stressing instead the differences.[49]

The concept of national 'ways of war' has also been applied to the United States by Russell Weigley. Weigley provides a detailed history of the military experience of the United States in the belief that 'the relatively remote past' plays an important part in shaping current attitudes and actions. It may be at least as influential as the recent past, for it may be less well understood and less clearly recalled yet still have cut 'deeper grooves of custom in our minds'. This raises the question of the relative significance of recent and less recent history; above, it was suggested that in the British case, the influence of World War One on the thinking of those who experienced it was hugely important, whereas those born later whose main experience of war was the 1939-45 conflict learned rather different lessons.[50] This is an interesting question for strategic culture analysts, and one which will be discussed later in the thesis.

Weigley's book is one of a number criticised by Ken Booth in an essay which draws attention to what he regards as the many myths and misconceptions about the nature of US thinking about peace and war. Such myths, which result from lack of awareness about US history, unsophisticated strategic understanding and the activities of self-interested myth-makers, pervade the literature on strategic studies. Booth argues not that 'American strategic man' does not exist, but that he is more complicated than is often realised. There should be no single image, but rather several images, of 'American strategic man'. Booth also makes the point that comparative studies are important to bring out what all states share and avoid giving improper emphasis to US cultural distinctiveness. The essay therefore contains important cautions over the 'way in warfare' approach. Another point which Booth hints at but might have made more strongly, however, is that the image

[49] *Ibid*, p. *xi*.
[50] Weigley, p. *xx*.

which America holds of itself, however inaccurate it may be, can be seen as an important part of its strategic culture.[51]

The work on defence culture and national ways in warfare has much in common with the strategic culture approach. From this brief look at some of that work various points emerge. One is that it is possible to give unwarranted emphasis to the cultural characteristics of nations. A comparative approach is recommended by many writers as a way to insure against this. A second point is that history can be used selectively and manipulated to manufacture an artificial 'way in warfare' which supports the policy preference of the writer. A third point is that this type of analysis, like any, can be done badly. A fourth is that culture can become a site of political debate, as writers advocate that states should behave in ways alleged to be consonant with their culture. A fifth is that the influence of foreign ideas can be important; though foreign writers may be interpreted through the filter of national concerns, and it may be of significance which foreign thinkers 'catch on' in particular states, and why. Other points which emerge are that the relative importance of different periods in history should be investigated, and that present concerns may influence how history is interpreted.

Overall, while there is interesting work on defence culture and national ways of warfare, it is often intuitive. There is little conceptual writing on how national ways of warfare develop, or on how precisely historical experience affects current thinking and action. In this sense strategic culture can be seen as a more sophisticated version of the 'way in warfare' approach, a revival or reassertion of an older tradition which aspires to a more rigorous examination of some of the same factors and which focuses on similar concerns.

[51] Ken Booth, 'American Strategy: The Myths Revisited', in Ken Booth and Moorhead Wright, (eds), *American Thinking About Peace and War* (Sussex: Harvester, 1978), pp. *ix-x* and 1-33.

Culture and 'common sense'

There is arguably an intuitive or 'common sense' appeal to the concept of strategic culture.[52] It is unremarkable to observe that the place of women in society is regarded differently across cultures, even that styles of football vary in different countries. Why then should issues of peace and war not be seen differently by different cultures? The intuitive appeal of strategic culture means that, even if not flagged explicitly as such, much analysis can found which shares its preoccupations. This is the case both in academic and journalistic discourses. A reading of recent newspapers yields several examples. One concerns the fighting between Russian armed forces and Chechen rebels initiated by President Boris Yeltsin in December of 1994. This was seen as another episode in the long and bitter Chechen struggle for independence from Russia and the Soviet Union. Stalin's mass deportation of Chechens to Siberia was but one instance in centuries of oppression, which had been fiercely resisted by the Chechen people. Alexander Solzhenitsyn famously wrote in his *Gulag Archipelago* that the Chechens alone 'refused to accept the psychology of submission'.[53] Here, it is suggested, is a nation whose distinctive history and experience has left it determined to achieve independence from Russia and willing to fight and to sustain high losses in the process. Had the Russians taken fully into account the nature of their foe, would they have expected to achieve a rapid and decisive military victory? Would they, indeed, have approached 'the Chechen problem' in a different manner altogether?

Another newspaper article on Japanese kamikaze pilots supports the contention that different peoples may well approach the use of military force and the manipulation of military power in quite different ways. British pilots might, during World War Two, have been sent on bombing missions in which very high attrition rates were expected, but they had a chance of returning. Japanese *Tokkotai* pilots were, however, despatched on kamikaze missions from which, barring accidents, there was no chance of returning.

[52] Common sense, however, is likened to a cultural system by Clifford Geertz. See *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (London: Fontana, 1993), chapter 4.
[53] See Steve Crawshaw, 'Who are these people?', *The Independent*, 18 January 1996.

Moreover, this was only one of a range of ways in which Japanese citizens were expected to lay down their own lives towards the end of the war. 'I felt perfectly happy to die for the emperor', recalls Kako Senda, who commanded a unit of the Japanese equivalent of the Home Guard, and whose task in the event of a US invasion of mainland Japan was to stand in a concealed hole with a bomb and detonate it when a tank passed above. 'If I had been summoned to the Kamikaze Corps itself I would have gone cheerfully. I believed it would be an honour to die for my emperor. All young men felt the same way'.[54] This willingness to countenance self-sacrifice sets Japan apart from most other nations and demands explanation. Is there something in the nature of Japanese society, perhaps in the subordination of the needs of the individual to those of the community, or in the perceived shame of surrender, which produced or permitted the phenomenon of kamikaze pilots?

Reports of reactions to a speech given in February 1996 by the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl suggest that the same stimulus does not always produce the same response from within different cultures. Kohl described the issue of European integration as 'in reality a question of war and peace in the 21st century'. His point was that if the process of integration in Europe was not maintained, the continent could witness a return to the infighting and violent competition between states which had characterised previous centuries, and, most destructively, the first half of the twentieth century. If this message was overly dramatic, it nevertheless seemed reasonable to many continental Europeans for whom the success of the European Union has indeed always been linked to the need to avoid renewed warfare. But in Britain the speech was received rather differently. Some newspapers and Members of Parliament interpreted it as a threat rather than a warning, drawing from it the inference that if Chancellor Kohl did not get his way on monetary union through persuasion, he would resort to force. Kohl was warmongering, therefore, rather than scare-mongering.[55]

[54] See Peter Popham, 'Kamikaze Nation', *The Independent Saturday Magazine*, 5 August 1995.
[55] On the reaction to Kohl's speech, see Imre Karacs, 'Why Kohl could be Britain's best friend in Europe', *The Independent on Sunday*, 11 February 1996; and Andrew Marr, 'Why we should listen to the Panzer's rumble', *The Independent*, 6 February 1996.

While it would be imprudent to attach too much significance to the excesses of the tabloid press and the views of a handful of 'Eurosceptic' Conservative MPs, it must be acknowledged that they represent at least a section of public opinion in Britain. Further articles record similar incidents. When England lost a crucial football World Cup qualifying tie in 1993, one English player accused the referee, a German, of making decisions which favoured the Netherlands. His alleged motive was to obtain revenge for his country's defeat by Britain in two world wars. This remark, which Germans would find both absurd and offensive, went unpunished by a Football Association usually keen to crack down on players seen to be bringing the game into disrepute. Indeed it went little remarked.[56] Similar attitudes were on display also at an exhibition of Anglo-German cartoons at the Goethe Institute in London during 1994. German cartoons portrayed Britons in genteel fashion, while British cartoons, in significant contrast, frequently depicted Germans as goose-stepping Nazis.[57] A distinctively British approach to Germany emerges: a nation, or at least part of one, still at war with Germany in its psyche.

While the term 'strategic culture' itself may not be employed often, examples of articles in the same spirit as the above are legion.[58] Journalists often invoke cultural difference as an important analytical tool, and the daily press furnishes ample instances of supposed national differences of approach in the strategic realm. This is not to say that strategic culture should therefore necessarily be a tool employed often in academic discourse. However, it is to suggest that this sort of analysis warrants further consideration.

[56] See Kenan Malik, 'A Britain Still at War with Germany', *The Independent*, 6 June 1994.
[57] See Steve Crawshaw, 'Still exhibiting the same old prejudices', *The Independent*, 9 February 1994.
[58] The only instance I have seen of strategic culture appearing in a newspaper is by Bryan Appleyard, in 'Defeated in war, victorious in therapy', *The Independent*, 12 April 1995.

Conclusion

Many scholars have written about military culture, defence culture, or national ways in warfare. The term 'security culture' has also been employed.[59] Many others, drawn from the ranks of academic scholars and also more casual, journalistic commentators, have implicitly undertaken the same type of analysis without employing these terms. There is, therefore, some weight to Colin Gray's observation that Jack Snyder, in discussing strategic culture, had discovered the obvious. However, Gray added that discovery of the obvious can be important.[60] Even if cultural factors have not always been ignored, neither have they always been studied systematically or explicitly, nor given the attention they deserve. Strategic culture seems to have captured the imaginations of a number of scholars as a felicitous turn of phrase which neatly encapsulates certain important aspects of strategic thinking and behaviour. It provides a heading under which these aspects may be grouped and studied more explicitly. If the ideas comprising strategic culture are not new, nevertheless they are 'a set of ideas...whose intellectual time [has] finally come'.[61] The following chapters provide detailed analysis of why more concerted effort should be applied to the study of strategic culture and its associated ideas, and why it can be said that their time has come. In the first instance, Chapter Two surveys the literature which directly addresses the subject of strategic culture.

[59] The term 'security culture' is used by Nicholas J. Wheeler and Ken Booth, in 'The Security Dilemma', in John Baylis and N.J. Rengger, (eds), *Dilemmas of World Politics: International Issues in a Changing World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 38.
[60] Gray, p. 33.
[61] Ken Booth, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed', p. 122.

Chapter Two: Strategic Culture

Since the first recorded use of the term 'strategic culture', in Jack Snyder's 1977 RAND Report, a small literature has coalesced around the term. Work has been published on the strategic cultures of China, the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, Germany and the states of North-East and South-East Asia.[1] Proliferation in usage of the term is not, however, necessarily accompanied by consensus on its meaning and importance, nor on how to study it. The fact that strategic culture is a more and more visible term in the literature does not require that all those who write about it understand it to mean the same thing. Indeed, the likelihood that the label strategic culture will be understood, applied and valued differently is strong, given the notoriously nebulous nature of culture, a slippery term which can bear numerous distinct definitions.[2] That the list of those who have tackled strategic culture includes some strange bedfellows in Colin Gray, Ken Booth, Charles Kupchan and Bradley Klein, further suggests that differences will emerge in the uses to which strategic culture has been put and the ways in which it has been approached.

The task which this chapter sets itself, therefore, is essentially that of stock-taking. The chapter will survey the literature on strategic culture, bringing together as much as possible of the work which goes under that heading. The survey will at first be chronological. The aim will be to describe the uses to which strategic culture has been put, and the methods by which it has been applied, and also to give more of a flavour of the

[1] A full list of works on strategic culture is included in the bibliography. Many of them are discussed in this chapter.
[2] Culture has been described as 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language'. See R.B.J. Walker, 'The Concept of Culture in the Theory of International Relations', in Jongsuk Chay, (ed), *Culture and International Relations* (New York: Praeger, 1990), p. 4.

nature of the concept. The conclusion will then seek to distinguish between different types of use of the concept, to assess how closely the strategic culture analyses so far undertaken are related to each other, and to identify areas which need further consideration and refinement. Particular attention will be paid to the following areas: the definitions of strategic culture advanced by the different scholars; their views of the origins of strategic cultures and how they are formed and reproduced; their ideas on how strategic cultures impinge upon strategic behaviour; their methodological approaches to the study of strategic culture; and their reasons for studying strategic culture.

Snyder's Monster

Jack Snyder's analysis of strategic culture was described in Chapter One of the thesis. To recap briefly, he argued that the Soviet Union, and by extension other states, had a distinctive strategic culture, defined as

> the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy.[3]

Formed by the unique historical experience of the state, its geographical location, and political culture, this strategic culture impinged on policy by acting as a perceptual lens through which strategic issues were viewed, and guiding the thinking of the elite about them. It set the vocabulary and conceptual parameters of debate. It influenced, though did not determine, the behaviour of states. Change would occur in the culture, but it would be gradual, and it was possible that strategic ideas would outlive the circumstances which had originally brought them about.

In the case of the Soviet Union, for instance, recent experience of war had significantly contributed to the shaping of strategic attitudes. The Soviet Union had

[3] Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica: RAND R-2154-AF, 1977), p. 8.

experienced war on its own territory, and war of a devastating nature, while the United States had not. Nazi Germany had abided by few rules of war on the Eastern front. This militated against the adoption by Soviet leaders of a co-operative strategy such as limited nuclear operations, because the lesson many had drawn from Soviet experience was that self-reliance was the key to security. The Soviet Union ought to keep its fate in its own hands as far as possible, rather than relying on the actions of others.[4] Additionally, the internal organisation of the Soviet Union in the defence field favoured war-winning strategies. The pre-eminent position of the military in developing doctrine led to a downplaying of political and diplomatic factors, and a stress on fighting and winning wars, not intrawar deterrence.[5]

Snyder's conclusion was that distinctive US and Soviet strategic cultures which affected the behaviour of the two states could be discerned. Therefore 'it would be dangerous to assume that Soviet crisis decision-makers will be willing to tailor their behavior to American notions of strategic rationality'.[6] The study of strategic culture was crucial if the United States was to formulate a nuclear strategy which would deter the Soviet Union or, failing that, wage war without destroying the world.

Snyder sounded a note of caution when he advised that his conclusions about Soviet strategic culture, based as they were on indirect evidence rather than direct access to the thoughts of decision-makers, should be 'viewed with a large dose of circumspection'.[7] Nevertheless, in 1977 he had introduced the term 'strategic culture' to the vocabulary of strategic studies with a plea to strategists to pay more attention to national peculiarities in the use of force, or risk the consequences. Yet by 1990, he had moved from counselling caution in utilising strategic culture to advising against using it altogether. He condemned culture-based explanations as being 'of last resort', and

[4] *Ibid*, p. 28.
[5] *Ibid*, pp. 30-31.
[6] *Ibid*, p. 39.
[7] *Ibid*, p. 16.

disclaimed responsibility for the approach which he himself had pioneered.[8] The writers who have taken up the phrase since have used it in ways which Snyder said he had not envisioned and which he found inappropriate. Like Baron Frankenstein, Snyder beheld 'the miserable monster whom I had created' and perhaps wished 'to extinguish the spark of existence' which 'I so negligently bestowed'.[9]

Strategic culture: the pre-theory stage

Others have taken up the study of strategic culture with enthusiasm, however. The first to build on the 'path-breaking' work of Jack Snyder and Ken Booth was Colin Gray. Gray has often written about strategic culture, but his most important contributions came in an early article written in 1981 and then in 1986 in a full-length book.[10] Gray acknowledged that strategic culture was an underdeveloped concept which had not yet been established as a profitable field of enquiry. In 1986, he wrote that strategic culture remained at a 'rudimentary, or pretheory, stage'. Scholars appreciated the *fact* of its importance, he thought, but they had not yet determined the *extent* of its importance.[11]

In his article, Gray proceeded from the assumption that there were such things as strategic cultures, or 'modes of thought and action with respect to force'. He identified a distinctive US strategic culture, and highlighted certain of its 'endemic' features. He traced the roots of these features in such factors as US historical experience, political culture, geography, way of life and 'aspiration for self-characterization'. The strategic culture led to a particular US national style in strategy. It formed 'the milieu within which strategic ideas and defense policy decisions are debated and decided'. Studying strategic culture would

[8] Jack Snyder, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor', in Carl G. Jacobsen, (ed), *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 4.
[9] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 57, 195 and 131.
[10] Colin Gray explored strategic culture in 'National Style in Strategy: The American Example', *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall 1981), pp. 21-47. The phrase 'path-breaking' comes from p. 21 of this article, which later became part of his book *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986).
[11] Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, p. *xii*.

therefore aid the academic in understanding the actions of US policy-makers. It would also help policy-makers to know themselves and other cultures better, and to communicate with others, and so to make better policy and put it into effect. It could help both academics and policy-makers, given that the culture was enduring, to predict the policy of other states in the future.[12]

In 1986 Gray published a book which gave an extended treatment to these themes. His argument, grounded in the assumption that the United States and the Soviet Union exhibited different styles of nuclear policy-making, was that the US had chosen the wrong nuclear strategy. They had done so 'through incomprehension of [their] own and Soviet strategic culture and national style'.[13] Gray highlighted what he considered to be the main features of Soviet and US strategic culture. US decision-makers exhibited a 'managerial approach' to the use of force, as opposed to a strategic one, for instance. Their stress was on managing men and resources rather than directing armed forces in battle. The enormous resources available to the United States encouraged the view that mobilising resources was more important than developing tactics and strategy, while the security provided by geographic isolation, and a history of fighting mainly weaker opponents, obviated the need for detailed strategic thinking.[14] On the basis of his analysis of the Soviet and US strategic cultures, Gray concluded that the danger existed that should war break out, NATO would be fighting to limit the conflict, and to control escalation, while the USSR would be fighting to win, placing the latter at an advantage. He therefore suggested a strategy for the United States which he believed was more appropriate in the light of his analysis of the Soviet and US national styles in nuclear strategy, involving a war-fighting emphasis.[15]

Though he remained convinced of the value of a strategic cultural approach, and

[12] Gray, 'National Style in Strategy', pp. 21-23.
[13] Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, pp. *ix-xii*.
[14] *Ibid*, pp. 40-44.
[15] *Ibid*, pp. 311-19.

criticised the neglect in strategic studies of 'the perspectives of history and cultural anthropology', Gray also recognised various pitfalls and limitations to this approach and stressed the need to maintain a sceptical attitude towards it.[16] In particular he argued against a deterministic approach, or a reductionist one. Strategic culture produced tendencies but did not determine behaviour, he emphasised. States might therefore act wholly out of accord with their cultures at times, when other factors - for example structural pressures - were especially strong. These other factors constantly had to be borne in mind, as to overstress strategic culture at their expense would produce distorted analysis.[17] Another danger was that if you looked hard enough for cultural distinctiveness you would find it, and you could then, if you were not careful, see it as the cause of any behaviour. Strategic culture could be 'misapplied so as to explain, even rationalize, anything and everything. The theory becomes tautological, and in seeking to explain everything, in fact it explains nothing'.[18]

So strategic culture was not to be seen as a direct cause of behaviour or as the sole cause. Gray also warned against insensitivity to change in strategic cultures and to divisions within them. Although he expected that, in the absence of any dramatic event, they would change only slowly, change had still to be taken into account.[19] In addition, the existence of sub-cultures which might be quite different from the dominant culture had to be catered for.[20] Finally Gray argued that strategic cultures could contain contradictory elements. Given his caveat that states might act at times in ways wholly out of accord with their cultures, instances of exceptional behaviour would always be found which could be used to 'disprove' the strategic culture thesis: to show that it did not produce particular outcomes.[21] Nevertheless, provided that these pitfalls were recognised and that strategic culture was not seen as the sole explanation of strategic behaviour or the only worthwhile

[16] *Ibid*, p. *xiv*.
[17] *Ibid*, pp. 34-35.
[18] *Ibid*, p. *xiii*.
[19] *Ibid*, p. 37.
[20] *Ibid*, p. 35.
[21] *Ibid*, pp. 35 and 56.

approach, Gray felt it could enhance understanding of military behaviour and lead to better policy.

Gray made a number of other noteworthy points about how to study strategic culture. Echoing a point made by Ken Booth in *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, he argued for an interdisciplinary approach to the subject.[22] The strategic culture of a country was, he wrote, 'comprehensible through an appropriate combination of historical, geographical, anthropological, psychological, and sociological study'.[23] He noted too that it was a direct descendant of the concept of political culture. Gray then described his own approach as 'inductive-empirical', seeking through observation of Soviet and US strategic behaviour to infer different cultural predispositions.[24] Gray, like Snyder and Booth, proposed no theoretical framework for the study of strategic culture.

US strategic culture was also the focus of an article published in 1985 by Carnes Lord.[25] Lord built explicitly on the work of Booth and Gray, as well as studies of the history of military thinking by Weigley and Kierman.[26] His article asked whether a unique US 'way of war' could be identified, and, if so, what its roots were and what help it could be in understanding the strategic problems currently confronting the United States. Lord argued that it was clear that states in the past had waged war in distinctive ways, due at least in part to 'changing material circumstances'. He believed that it 'made sense' to think of different national ways of war as a result also of 'the social, political and ideological characteristics that are centrally constitutive of a state'. The enormous political significance of war meant that the political classes of the nation were in charge of its prosecution, and so military activity was influenced by the nation's political culture.

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[22] Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979), p. 139.
[23] Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, p. 33.
[24] *Ibid*, p. 34.
[25] Carnes Lord, 'American Strategic Culture', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (July-September 1985), pp. 269-93.
[26] See Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1973); and Frank A. Kierman, Jr., and John K. Fairbank, (eds), *Chinese Ways in Warfare* (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1974).

'Military culture' or 'way of war' were phrases too narrow to use to describe this phenomenon. 'Strategic culture' on the other hand captured the political aspects also. It was defined by Lord as 'the traditional practices and habits of thought by which military force is organized and employed by a society in the service of its political goals'.[27]

Lord took the lack of investigation of strategic cultures thus far as evidence of their potency: strategists had been so dominated by their own strategic cultures that they had failed to recognise fully that others came from different cultures or that cultural differences could be significant.[28] Having satisfied himself that the study of strategic culture was worth pursuing, he went on to identify six basic sources of a strategic culture. These would vary in importance depending on which state was under examination. There was the geopolitical setting of a state; the nature of its international relationships; its political culture and ideology; its military history, traditions and education; the relationship between its civil and military sectors and its bureaucratic set-up; and finally the military technology available to it. All of these factors could influence strategic culture, Lord held.[29]

The article then turned to look at various aspects of US military policy in an attempt to gauge the importance of strategic culture. Lord argued that there was indeed a US strategic culture and that it exerted some influence over policy. For instance, the fact that the United States has generally been far superior to its enemies in resources, allied to the liberal view that war constituted a failure of politics rather than, in Clausewitzian terms, a continuation of it, led to a US style of war favouring military annihilation of the enemy rather than intrawar political bargaining or a strategy of attrition.[30] Concluding, Lord raised the question of how stable and enduring strategic cultures were, and whether they were 'susceptible to alteration by conscious design', though he did not attempt to

[27] Lord, pp. 270-71.
[28] *Ibid*, pp. 269-70.
[29] *Ibid*, pp. 272-74.
[30] *Ibid*, pp. 278-79.

answer the questions.[31]

Lord therefore provided a case study and some insight, but once more offered little in the way of theoretical elaboration. Nor did Bradley Klein, in an article published in 1988.[32] Klein came at strategic culture from a completely different direction to previous writers. Though he made brief references to Carnes Lord and Colin Gray, this was only to dismiss them as 'quasi-caesarists'.[33] Though these writers were themselves criticising strategic studies in their elaboration of the strategic culture approach, to Klein they were still operating essentially within the mainstream of strategy. They accepted the realist assumptions on which strategic studies were based: in particular, taking states for granted as the primary and legitimate actors in the strategic realm. Klein's chief inspiration was therefore not any previous writer on strategic culture, but rather Antonio Gramsci. While for realists, hegemony concerned the dominance of one state over international society, for Gramsci it had to do with the legitimacy of the ruling classes of states. Instead of taking states as timeless givens, Klein was interested in how regime legitimacy had been historically achieved, and in 'the power relations of particular regimes and classes which are able to generate ideas and practices that gain the normalizing status of common currency'.[34]

Where did strategic culture enter into this? Part of Klein's description of strategic culture is familiar: it 'embodies the state's war-making style, understood in terms of its military institutions and its accumulated strategic traditions of air, land and naval power'.[35] However, Klein also wrote that 'the point of the concept of strategic culture is to historicize what has lain implicit in realist theories of hegemony; the point, too, is to render palpable the political production of hegemony articulated at a theoretical level by

[31] *Ibid*, p. 288.
[32] Bradley S. Klein, 'Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (April 1988), pp. 133-48.
[33] *Ibid*, p. 139. Though clearly not complimentary, it is unclear exactly what Klein means by the term 'quasi-caesarists'.
[34] *Ibid*, pp. 134-35.
[35] *Ibid*, p. 136.

the Gramscian conception of hegemony'.[36] He wanted to examine how state governments could legitimise the use of force, to trace the occasions on which the population would regard the use of force as acceptable. His 'critical account of strategic culture' therefore 'displaces attention from the anarchic world of a Hobbesian state system to the terms of relations between the state and civil society'.[37] Thus Klein's is a radically different approach from that adopted by earlier writers on strategic culture, and an approach with different objectives in mind. His discussion of how strategic culture could be used in this enterprise reflected some of the thinking of earlier writers but in most respects represented a departure.

On US strategic culture, Klein appears to describe a mixture of conscious manipulation of strategic ideas by elites to achieve popular support for strategy, and the shaping of elite views by the mingling of history and geography. So, nuclear deterrence, a militarily offensive strategy which envisions bringing enormous destruction to bear on enemies, is rendered acceptable through emphasising its politically defensive objectives and discussing it in abstract, aseptic terms which conceal the real nature of nuclear war-fighting. In this the ruling class maintains its legitimacy. At the same time, the lack of direct US experience of fighting and bombardment produces this abstract thinking, and the legacy of thinkers such as Mahan is to enable US citizens to accept offensive military strategies aimed at achieving politically defensive ends.[38] It is unclear how from Klein's analysis how far elites are manipulating ideas, and how far they are being manipulated by the cultural milieu to which they belong.

Klein's piece is best understood not as an examination of strategic culture as it is understood by most writers on the subject, but rather as a wide-reaching critique, informed by critical theory, of strategic studies. He makes certain insightful remarks about US strategic practice and culture, alerting us, for instance, to the growth of peace

[36] *Ibid*.
[37] *Ibid*.
[38] *Ibid*, pp. 137-39.

movements with alternative strategic cultures, which challenges the legitimacy of the discourse of the dominant classes.[39] He examines some of the key assumptions of Western strategic thought. Yet Klein appears to be engaged in a different enterprise from others in the strategic culture debate.

Subsequent writers on strategic culture have failed to pick up on the themes developed by Bradley Klein. They apparently agree that his is a different enterprise. Indeed, the next writer to take up strategic culture, in a doctoral thesis and two journal articles, has little in common with Bradley Klein beyond a shared surname.[40] Yitzhak Klein did, unlike Bradley Klein, number among his references Snyder and Booth, as well as Gray, yet like his namesake, also came up with quite a different approach. Noting the lack of theoretical and conceptual work on strategic culture, Yitzhak Klein claimed to advance a theory of strategic culture and to test it against the case study of Soviet strategic culture 1917-1965. This case study occupies the bulk of his thesis.

Yitzhak Klein defined strategic culture as 'the set of attitudes and beliefs held within a military establishment concerning the political objective of war and the most effective strategy and operational method of achieving it'.[41] His was a much more limited definition than that of earlier commentators. In terms of the referent group, it was limited to the military establishment, excluding the political leadership and the rest of the nation. In terms of the sources of the strategic culture, Yitzhak Klein distanced himself from those who looked at the influence of the general culture of a nation, its political culture, and its historical experience, on its strategy. He preferred to examine something narrower and closer to the institutional culture of the armed forces.

It is also clear from Yitzhak Klein's work that he does not see the strategic culture

[39] *Ibid*, pp. 143-44.
[40] Ira J. Klein, *Soviet Strategic Culture, 1917-1965* (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1988); Yitzhak Klein, 'The Sources of Soviet Strategic Culture', *The Journal of Soviet Military Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (December 1989), pp. 453-90; and Yitzhak Klein, 'A Theory of Strategic Culture', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January-March 1991), pp. 3-23. (Yitzhak and Ira Klein are the same person.)
[41] Klein, *Soviet Strategic Culture*, p. 37.

as a milieu in which policy is created, as a force operating often without their realising it on the minds of decision-makers. Rather he sees it as a framework consciously created by decision-makers to aid the analysis of problems and the formulation of policy. He calls it an 'indispensable but subjective guide to the planner's decisions', and describes the strategic culture as a synthetic analytic framework.[42] Klein looks for strategic culture in the writings of leading military figures, in the Soviet military journals, and he seeks not their unstated but their explicitly stated assumptions.[43] He examines the way that the Soviet military has used the precepts of Marxism-Leninism as the basis of its strategy.[44] He talks of how the Second World War reflected upon the reputation of the Soviet strategic culture and refers to officers subscribing to its tenets.[45] He asks at one point what need Soviet strategists have of a strategic culture.[46]

All these statements suggest that strategic culture is a set of rules drawn up to guide action rather than Snyder's 'conditioned emotional responses' or Lord's 'habits of thought'. Klein's strategic culture was a tangible thing, produced by conscious design and not conditioning. Where others would have been interested in the effect of Russian history, political or general culture on strategy, Klein was not. Overall the reader is left wondering whether, if the phrase strategic culture was replaced with military doctrine, it would significantly affect Klein's argument. His work was not then about strategic culture as understood by earlier writers, but was rather closer to the work of Barry Posen, whom he cites, on sources of military doctrine.[47]

Klein did nevertheless make some interesting points which could have relevance for the study of strategic culture. He argued, for instance, that the geography of a state was not as important to the formation of strategic culture as how decision-makers

[42] *Ibid*, pp. 43-45 and 49.
[43] *Ibid*, p. 9.
[44] *Ibid*, p. 82.
[45] *Ibid*, pp. 125 and 133.
[46] *Ibid*, p. 43.
[47] See Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

interpreted its implications. This at least refined the idea of other commentators that the geographic setting in which a state exists influences its strategic culture.[48] Klein also commented that the operation of strategic culture might best be observed when it led a state to behave in a counterproductive fashion. That is, the strategic culture may lead a state to go on thinking about security in ways no longer pertinent to new circumstances.[49] A final interesting aspect of his work is the concluding remark that the comparative study of strategic culture was important, though he does not develop this point in detail.[50]

In a book on Chinese nuclear strategy, Chong-Pin Lin also picked up the strategic culture theme in 1988.[51] Pin's aim was to show that there existed a distinctively Chinese nuclear strategy 'which, even while evolving, manifests certain persistent strategic principles found in Chinese traditional culture'. He hoped to do so by examining Chinese nuclear strategy comparatively, 'in telltale contradistinction with the approaches of other major nuclear powers'.[52] As a result of a long history in relative isolation, Pin wrote, the Chinese had become a history conscious people. However, if this made for continuity with the past, the import of the Western technology of nuclear weapons, Soviet military training, and a foreign ideology with an anti-traditional bias, could all press for discontinuity. If, in spite of all these factors, a distinctively Chinese strategic culture persisted in the nuclear age, it was surely a significant factor.[53] Lin's view was that it had done. Among the distinctive features of Chinese strategic culture which he singled out was a reliance on ambiguity. This continued into the nuclear age with the Chinese shrouding in ambiguity their capabilities and strategic nuclear intentions. There was also a traditional emphasis on extra-military and extra-combative features, including placing morale and psychological factors ahead of technology. This too continued into the nuclear era, despite the power of nuclear weapons. The Chinese did not elevate military force above political

[48] Klein, *Soviet Strategic Culture*, p. 4.
[49] *Ibid*, pp. 66 and 284.
[50] *Ibid*, p. 377.
[51] Chong-Pin Lin, *China's Nuclear Weapons Strategy: Tradition Within Evolution* (Lexington, MASS: Lexington Books, 1988).
[52] *Ibid*, p. 1.
[53] *Ibid*, pp. 6-7.

and economic factors.

Strategic culture: towards a coming of age?

Towards the end of 1980s and into the 1990s, the strategic culture literature showed some signs of growing in sophistication, though much of the work being done was still lacking in refinement. In a 1989 review article, David Twining characterised strategic culture as the 'missing dimension' in Western intelligence analysis of the Soviet Union.[54] Understanding the Soviet strategic culture - described as 'those fundamental attitudes, values, and beliefs pertaining to the preparation for and conduct of war' - was a path to inferring correctly the strategic intentions of the Soviet Union from the available intelligence materials, always a problematic endeavour for Western intelligence agencies.[55] While intelligence experts had failed to take adequate account of the cultural specificity of the Soviet Union, area studies specialists had, Twining asserted, contented themselves with descriptive work and *ad hoc* explanations, but lacked 'sufficient boldness' to look for more systematic comprehension of Soviet behaviour.[56] In search of such comprehension, Twining briefly examined the concept of political culture and then turned to strategic culture, which he regarded as a subset of political culture. The power of strategic culture, Twining argued, drawing on Booth, lies in its ability to take analysts out of their own cultures and into the cultures of others. However, whether an objective, 'apolitical, unbiased, scholarly analysis of the military balance' will ever be possible, with or without strategic culture being brought into the equation, Twining regarded as doubtful.[57]

Twining also sees strategic culture as a parsimonious approach, though it is not clear how he means this, especially since he writes that 'to understand Soviet strategic culture calls for the talents of the area specialist, historian, anthropologist, sociologist and

[54] David T. Twining, 'Soviet Strategic Culture - The Missing Dimension', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January 1989), pp. 169-87.
[55] *Ibid*, p. 169.
[56] *Ibid*, pp. 176-77.
[57] *Ibid*, p. 173.

political scientist'.[58] This suggests that a lot of ground needs to be covered. Building on the work of Snyder and Gray, he suggests certain core attributes of operational Soviet strategic culture, which is distinct from the official culture of the regime. These include an insatiable search for security, influenced crucially by the Soviet experience of World War Two; the need for a strong state; a desire not to rely on others for security; a belief in the political utility of military power; and a tendency, derived from Russian history, to see world affairs as a permanent struggle for power. In the context of these beliefs, Twining argued, events such as the 1983 shooting down of the KAL airliner are more fully comprehensible. What appears an excessive use of force is easier to understand when it is appreciated to what extent Soviet leaders see themselves as engaged in permanent struggle. More work was needed on the rudimentary concept of strategic culture, Twining concluded, but without understanding of Soviet strategic culture, accurate assessment of the Soviet threat would be impossible, and greater mutual understanding hindered.

Another 1990 publication which claimed to employ strategic culture as a key concept was a book by Stephen Szabo dealing with German security thinking.[59] Szabo referred to Booth, Snyder and Gray, and to a 1979 *Foreign Affairs* article by Michael Howard which described the social dimension of military power as having been forgotten by most strategists, and especially nuclear strategists. However, Szabo had nothing to say on the concept itself or on how it might be studied. An initial profile of German strategic culture briefly mentioned the weight of the past, and especially the Nazi period, as a constraining factor which made both Germans and other Europeans wary of a politically and militarily strong Germany. Other aspects of German strategic culture were mentioned also, but it was not clear how they were derived. Strategic culture then flitted in and out of the analysis, which looked at the role of public opinion and political parties in shaping security policy. Overall, the same book could have been written without mention of strategic culture, which was also seen as very changeable. Different generations, of the

[58] *Ibid*, p. 180.
[59] Stephen F. Szabo, *The Changing Politics of German Security* (London: Pinter, 1990).

Weimar years, the Nazi period, of the post-war reconstruction era, were likely to have quite different views, it was argued, and the events of the 1980s, such as the cruise and Pershing deployment, led to further change in attitudes.

One barrier to entering into the culture of others, of course, can be language. The famous remark that Britain and the United States are divided by a common language cautions that mutual culture blindness can afflict even those who share a language; it may be that a common language leads to the incorrect presumption of a common culture. However, where a language barrier needs to be crossed the problem may be more obvious but no less difficult. This literature survey, claiming to be comprehensive, has been of English language sources. Has the concept of strategic culture spread further? Is there an equivalent in other languages? The only non-English language piece in the literature survey undertaken in this chapter appeared in 1990. This was an article by Jean Barrea, entitled 'Cultures Politico-Stratégiques de "Conviction" et de "Responsabilité", in the journal *Stratégique*.[60]

Barrea noted that during the SALT negotiations in the 1970s US strategists discovered that the tendency for states to acquire the same technology had not led to convergence of their strategic thinking: 'l'uniformisation technique du monde n'entraîne pas à sa suite, en matière stratégique y compris, une homogénéisation culturelle'.[61] Soviet strategists had not, as their US counterparts had ethnocentrically thought, adopted the same strategy as the United States. Quoting no particular source, Barrea wrote that the literature had developed the concept of 'culture stratégique' to embrace this differentiation. He used the Weberian distinction between an ethic of conviction and an ethic of responsibility to characterise the different US and Soviet strategic nuclear cultures. The strategy of massive retaliation and the preference for mutual assured destruction fitted into this ethic of conviction, involving an unwillingness on the part of US decision-makers to

[60] Jean Barrea, 'Cultures Politico-Stratégiques de "Conviction" et de "Responsabilité": essai d'analyse non stratégique de données militaires', *Stratégique*, Vol. 45 (1990), pp. 49-84.
[61] *Ibid*, p. 53.

take responsibility for the consequences of their actions and to transfer that responsibility to others: if another party initiated nuclear war, massive destruction would follow. The Soviet Union on the other hand belonged to an opposing culture of responsibility, which accepted responsibility for its actions. Taking account of the frailties of humankind, the Soviets sought a strategy which would enable them to defend themselves through a pre-emptive, counterforce disarming first strike on an enemy.

Barrea saw two causes of this divergence of strategic culture. First was a society's experience of imperialism, and second its type of political system. The United States had a tradition of imperialism in which other peoples were destroyed, and this corresponds to a nuclear strategy which threatens all-out destruction. The Soviet Union's way in imperialism was to seek political domination of others, corresponding to a strategy of war prevention and disarming the enemy. With regard to political systems, only the open system in the United States could contemplate a strategy which could lead to its destruction. The freedom of the people was paramount, and where this is true, it is possible to choose destruction. For the Soviet Union, a closed system of which the leaders were managers rather than free agents, the system itself had to be preserved as it was the product of the inevitable progress of history. This deterministic position therefore envisaged that neither could the Soviet Union have adopted the strategic nuclear posture of the United States, nor vice versa.

However, Barrea continued, with the advent of the Reagan administration, an unusually right-wing government for the United States, things did change. To punish the Soviet Union for its invasion of Afghanistan, and to exploit a window of opportunity due to the latter's economic weakness, Reagan began a massive arms build up, mixing defence and offence and ending up with a strategy closer to that of the Soviet Union. Already the steps initiated by the United States under the Schlesinger doctrine in the mid-1970s had taken the USA in this direction, in order to avert a suicide or surrender scenario. The Soviet Union, unable to match this spending, found itself relying on an assured destruction

posture like that of the United States. The adoption by each state of a military posture in keeping with the other's strategic culture, but not its own, creates a tension for each between military security and ideological stability. Barrea provided an interesting illustrative argument, describing differences of strategic thinking between the superpowers. However, it was not an especially probing analysis of strategic culture. He had little to say about the concept itself and how it could be studied.

1990 also saw the publication of a major volume, edited by Carl Jacobsen, comparing US and Soviet strategic cultures, and including chapters by Jack Snyder and Ken Booth, the first highly critical of strategic culture, the second affirming its value.[62] The book was based on the belief that US strategic writing had neglected history and culture, and aimed to raise consciousness about the need to include history and culture in strategic analysis. Over forty-four chapters it compared Soviet and US strategic policies, with most of the contributors concluding that strategic culture was important to understanding these policies. There were sections on Soviet and US attitudes to strategic concepts such as deterrence, limited war and arms control, as well as sections on the processes by which each reached strategic decisions, and their views on the use of force more generally. A criticism levelled at the book, however, is that its organisation, with one chapter on Soviet values followed by one on US values on a particular aspect of strategy, did not offer direct comparison.[63] Moreover there was no conclusion to bring out more directly and explicitly the contrasts and comparisons, nor really a rigid and commonly adhered to framework for analysis.

The first section of the book devoted some attention to the concept of strategic culture itself, though without adding much theoretical sophistication. Here there were descriptions of Soviet and US strategic cultures, as well as the discussions by Snyder and Booth. Snyder began by rehearsing the arguments of his original RAND Report, but went

[62] Jacobsen.
[63] See Eric Herring, *Crisis Behaviour in the Nuclear Age: Delusions of Superpower* (PhD Thesis, Aberystwyth, 1992), p. 332.

on to cast doubt on the utility of the strategic culture work done thus far. He was critical of the literature on the 'alleged contrasts' between Soviet and US strategic thinking, believing himself that these were less stark than was argued and that often these states had behaved exactly as Schelling's generic strategic man would have done. The strategic culture approach tended to exaggerate differences, Snyder thought.[64]

Moreover, this approach was not particularly good at explaining such differences as did exist. Snyder had not himself in his RAND Report brought general cultural traits into the argument and did not feel it would be useful to do so. Explanations based on culture were vague, he felt, with causes remote from consequences. Culture often became an explanation of 'last resort', used to explain what could not be explained by other means.[65] Another problem with cultural approaches was that they understated the possibility of change. Given also that these approaches had been shown empirically to fail, as they had produced wrong predictions, Snyder's conclusion was that other approaches were preferable. Most differences in strategic behaviour could be explained perfectly well by different internal and external circumstances of states. It was only appropriate to speak of culture in the limited sense of institutional inertia, the way in which policy could become ingrained through training and socialisation.[66]

Having discussed in his earlier work the importance of cultural factors in strategy, Ken Booth focused squarely on strategic culture and defended it against Snyder's criticisms.[67] He began by describing what he understood strategic culture to be and how it affected policy. For Booth strategic culture concerned

> a nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behaviour, habits, symbols, achievements and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems with respect to the threat or use of force.

[64] Snyder, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor', pp. 3-4.
[65] *Ibid*, pp. 4-6.
[66] *Ibid*, pp. 6-8.
[67] Ken Booth, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed', in Jacobsen.

Of specific interest was the aggregation of attitudes of 'the most influential voices' of the nation, which could be 'the political elite, the military establishment and/or public opinion'. As the sources of strategic culture Booth picked out history, geography and political culture.[68]

Strategic culture operated, Booth hypothesised, not by determining policy; other explanatory factors - such as technological push - had a part to play in deciding which course of action was chosen. Rather, the strategic culture could help to shape behaviour and define 'a set of patterns of and for a nation's behaviour on war and peace issues'. Continuity of behaviour permitted discussion of a 'particular national "style"' in strategy.[69] Continuity was therefore assumed. A strategic culture was likely to change only slowly, except in the event of dramatic changes in circumstances, such as a revolution in technology. Booth nevertheless shared Snyder's concern that strategic culture studies tended to be insensitive to the possibility of change. He stressed the need to avoid such insensitivity, for change would occur. However, he pointed out also that other approaches could commit the same error. They too could come up with wrong predictions through insensitivity to change. To point out difficulties in this new approach can be to ignore the difficulties faced by established approaches.[70]

Booth accepted that Snyder had sounded some useful warnings about the uses and misuses of strategic culture. However, he was not convinced by all of Snyder's arguments nor by his basic thesis that strategic culture was an approach of little value. In particular he criticised Snyder's concentration on nuclear strategy, for nuclear weapons were likely to impose far more constraints on national cultures than conventional. Even so, Booth believed that strategic culture did help explain some of the differences in approach to nuclear strategy of the two superpowers. Booth also argued that Snyder failed to take into account that the organisations he described operated within particular cultural

[68] *Ibid*, p. 121.
[69] *Ibid*.
[70] *Ibid*, p. 127.

environments, and that, indeed, the strategic culture approach did not 'exclude other "useful" explanations and that those other explanations may well themselves contain a cultural dimension'. Finally he rejected Snyder's charge that 'internal and external realities' were more important influences on policy, on the grounds that such 'realities' were subjectively perceived; they were 'in part culturally constructed as well as culturally perpetuated'.[71]

Booth also criticised the assumptions underlying Snyder's critique. These were assumptions typical of political science, emphasising immediate causes, uneasy about less immediate, cultural ones. Analysts from the humanities might well feel more at home with cultural causes, Booth believed, but social scientists needed also to find a place for them in their theories. If they sacrificed some rigour from their theories, then these theories could yet become richer. Booth acknowledged that the study of cultural factors would not be easy, as their importance was not quantifiable. But ignoring them carried its own dangers: of falling victim to ethnocentrism; of not understanding the enemy adequately; of leaving history out of the analysis; of assuming states acted in much the same ways; of poor communication based on lack of understanding; and of poor threat assessment.[72]

Two other key chapters of the book were general pieces on Soviet and US strategic cultures. Neither had much to say on the theoretical side of strategic culture but each raised some useful points. The chapter by David Jones on Soviet strategic culture contrasts with Yitzhak Klein's work on the same subject.[73] Jones stressed the importance of Russian imperial history and its legacy from Soviet strategic culture, which Klein had not. He was keen to avoid taking a deterministic line with regard to the geography of the Soviet Union, but did argue that the setting of this state meant there were certain 'permanently operating factors' on Soviet strategy.[74] In particular, the lack of natural

[71] *Ibid*, pp. 123-24.
[72] *Ibid*, pp. 124-26.
[73] David R. Jones, 'Soviet Strategic Culture', in Jacobsen.
[74] *Ibid*, p. 37.

borders and a history of invasion and destructive wars fought in Russia and the Soviet Union contributed to an inability to achieve a sense of security. Expansion in order to attain some degree of security was reasonable behaviour when seen in this light.[75]

William Kincade's chapter was based on the work of Booth and others in its approach to strategic culture but offered some fresh insight also.[76] Kincade discussed how America's geo-strategic situation, resources, history, military experience and political beliefs all influenced its strategy and shaped its strategic culture. He cautioned against viewing strategic cultures as overly consistent or homogeneous, and, on the relationship between culture and behaviour, suggested that part of a strategic culture could even be a mismatch between beliefs and behaviour. In the case of the strategic culture of the United States, various 'dualisms and dilemmas' could be detected due to differing perceptions of US strategic experience and situation. There were differences of outlook also between politicians and the military and within the military, on service lines. It was necessary to be sensitive to these differences 'while seeking regularities or commonalities traceable to the larger determinants of a nation's approach to war and peace'.[77]

Just after the publication of the volume edited by Jacobsen a doctoral thesis was produced which incorporated work on strategic culture. Kang Choi assessed the prospects for arms control in North-East Asia, asking whether the different defence and strategic cultures in the region explained in part the lack of progress there in arms control, compared to progress in Europe and between the superpowers, and whether different approaches to arms control were necessary in this region to suit the distinct strategic cultures of the states involved.[78] As well as differences of context, Kang Choi argued that cultural differences were significant. His conclusion was that culture did influence behaviour, with, for example, Chinese-Soviet arms control exhibiting a preference for

[75] *Ibid*, p. 38.
[76] William Kincade, 'American National Style and Strategic Culture', in Jacobsen.
[77] *Ibid*, p. 10.
[78] Kang Choi, *The Prospect of Arms Control in NorthEast Asia: A Contextual, Procedural, and Perceptual Approach* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ohio State University, 1991).

informal and effective cuts in distinction to the Western predilection for formal treaties which might be of symbolic importance.[79] Culture might be difficult to study but it was necessary for an understanding of arms control. However, there was very little theoretical discussion of strategic culture in the thesis, and it was not structured in such a way as to bring out clearly the relative importance of strategic cultural factors.

In 1992 two further works on strategic culture appeared, which, while they made some interesting observations, did little to advance our understanding of the concept itself. A book by Shu Guang Zhang on Chinese-US relations in the early post-war period argued that the two states differed in significant respects in their outlooks on strategy and deterrence.[80] Zhang found that the different outlooks of the states owed much to their different historical experiences, geopolitical settings and cultures. He analysed the different approach of each side to confrontations with the other, and the way in which, often, neither comprehended the motives and aims of the other, as a result of insensitivity to strategic culture. Even though Mao stressed Sun Zi's principle that if you 'know the enemy and know yourself' you can avoid defeat in a hundred battles, Chinese leaders were as guilty as US leaders of misperceiving the intentions and approaches of their adversary. Defence planners in the United States, for instance, failed to realise that a history of invasion by foreigners had left a deep mark on Chinese thinking. The Chinese were determined to stand up to foreign interference.[81] However insightful, Zhang's conception of strategic culture seems to have been based mainly on Ken Booth's *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, ignoring more recent work and adding little of interest on the theoretical side of strategic culture.

The same comment applies to an article in 1992 by George Tanham, who added to the strategic culture literature with an investigation of Indian strategic culture, moving

[79] *Ibid*, pp. 301-2.
[80] Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949-1958* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992).
[81] *Ibid*, pp. 116-17.

away from the work on the Soviet Union, China and the United States.[82] Tanham advanced some interesting points about Indian strategic policy, which he argued was influenced by Indian perceptions of history, geography and culture. These were very general points. For example, Tanham argued that tendencies in Indian culture towards fatalism and towards seeing the future as unpredictable militated against forward planning, as did the Indian view of time as cyclical rather than linear.[83] Tanham made no direct reference to the earlier work on strategic culture, and offered neither theoretical elaboration of the concept nor discussion of his methodological approach.

In 1993 Desmond Ball contributed to the strategic culture literature with an article on strategic culture in the Asia-Pacific region.[84] Taking as his cue the volume edited by Jacobsen, his premise was that

> the concept of strategic culture holds that different countries and regions approach the key issues of war, peace and strategy from perspectives that are both quite distinctive and deeply rooted, reflecting their different geostrategic situations, resources, military experience and political beliefs. These factors profoundly influence how a country perceives, protects and promotes its interests and values with respect to the threat or use of force.[85]

Ball noted that hitherto, strategic culture research had focused on states, and mainly the United States and the Soviet Union. Little had been written about other states or regions of the world. His own focus was on the Asia-Pacific region, which had been the focus of much work on 'political culture' and 'economic culture' but little on strategic culture. He intended to correct this oversight.[86] In doing so he considered the Asia-Pacific region as a whole, rather than individual states within the region. He believed that while national differences existed, broad regional cultural traits could also be identified. In this he was

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[82] George Tanham, 'Indian Strategic Culture', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter 1992), pp. 129-42.
[83] *Ibid*, pp. 130-31.
[84] Desmond Ball, 'Strategic Culture in the Asia-Pacific Region', *Security Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Autumn 1993), pp. 44-74.
[85] *Ibid*, pp. 44-45.
[86] *Ibid*, p. 45.

breaking new ground in terms of the strategic culture literature.

Ball's essay identified a number of principal elements of Asia-Pacific strategic culture, though it was unclear how and why he had singled these out. Evidence supporting them was drawn from the behaviour of states, statements of officials and ancient texts. The sources of these elements of strategic culture were the internal political organisation of the states of the region, the traditions and historical experience of the region, and their wider cultural values. Defining the strategic culture of the region largely in opposition to that of the West, Ball argued that Asians tend to think in longer time frames than Westerners; that their politics are characterised more by informality; that they believe much more strongly in the principle of non-intervention; that they favour bilateral international relations over multilateral; that they define security in broader terms than the West; that they prefer to operate with consensus; that they are more pragmatic than idealistic; and that they approach the use of force with more emphasis on achieving political objectives than military victories.

The state of the art

Over the last few years more impressive work has been done on strategic culture. In 1994, a major project was launched to examine 'Strategic Culture and Conflict Resolution in the Asia-Pacific Region'.[87] This project centred on a workshop at which papers were presented on the concept of strategic culture, and on the strategic cultures of most states of the region. These papers are to be published in book form.[88] The project had various aims. One was to provide a systematic comparative study of strategic culture. To this end, contributors were circulated with a framework for analysis on which to base their studies of particular countries. It was hoped that applying the framework would yield insight into

[87] The conference on 'Strategic Culture and Conflict Resolution in the Asia-Pacific Region', funded by the US Institute of Peace, was held on Langkawi Island, Malaysia, 14-17 August 1994.
[88] Ken Booth and Russell Trood, (eds), *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region*, should be published by Macmillan in 1997.

the strategic behaviour of the countries, and that refinement of the concept of strategic culture would also result. A second aim of the project was to investigate the prospects for peace in a region with potential for conflict. Nuclear tensions centring on North Korea and territorial disputes involving the Spratly Islands could escalate, while the existence of two Chinas and two Koreas occasions further instability. Would understanding of the strategic cultures of the states of the region assist the promotion of peaceful conflict resolution?

The final stage of the project has yet to be completed. This involves the publication of a book containing all the papers, revised in the light of the workshop discussions, as well as a section in which contrasts and comparisons are drawn and conclusions arrived at regarding security in the region. Provisionally, on the basis of the initial draft papers, it might be said that the project demonstrates some of the drawbacks of comparative research. The authors of the country studies all possessed expertise of the country they were to examine, but came from different academic backgrounds (as well as different cultural ones). Few were well acquainted with strategic culture, and, although supplied with a paper outlining the concept and its development, were working on it for the first time. Although each was enthusiastic about the significance of strategic culture, each also brought their own approaches to bear and set about the task in different ways.

The framework for analysis, never intended to become a strait-jacket which would prevent researchers from developing their own ideas and approaches peculiar to their own country of study, was applied more or less rigorously by different writers. This reflected in part the difficulty of getting a large number of academics to toe the same line, and in part the difficulty of devising a framework relevant to the circumstances, and indeed cultures, of various different states. Comparability was therefore to an extent compromised. It is also worth noting the authors of the framework were British, and it may therefore reflect cultural biases making it less applicable to the Asia-Pacific region. An important point to note about the framework, however, was that, while it pointed to some of the areas in which authors might look for material

regarding strategic culture, it provided little methodological guidance, leaving authors to make their own way.[89]

The framework represented a comprehensive approach to strategic culture, asking contributors initially to contemplate the sources of strategic culture. Three categories were suggested in which to search for sources. First, had the geography and resources of states shaped defence thinking? For instance, did the state enjoy secure, natural borders? Was it self-reliant in terms of strategically important resources? What were the implications of such factors for strategic thinking? Second, what effect had historical experiences had on strategic beliefs? What, for instance, were the key historical memories, and indeed which events were forgotten? What historical symbols could be identified, such as words like Munich, or Dunkirk, which conjured up particular understandings of past experience? Third, how had political structures, and in particular the defence organisation of a state, affected thinking? Was there a centralised or decentralised polity? What was the relationship between armed forces and government? Was there a militaristic society?

On the basis of such questions, contributors were asked to develop a profile of the strategic culture of their country, identifying its main characteristics, before linking this to contemporary policy on a number of issues: nuclear, conventional and unconventional strategy, arms control and disarmament. Also they were asked to probe the relationship between strategic culture and views of security, as well as processes of defence decision-making. Finally contributors were asked to look at the prospects for change in strategic cultures in the direction of peaceful conflict resolution and the delegitimisation of force, to the extent that existing cultures were not compatible with these notions.

The papers raised some interesting points for the study of strategic culture. Space permits only that a couple of examples may be picked out. In the case of Japan, World

[89] See Ken Booth and Alan Macmillan, 'Strategic Culture: Concept and Development', and 'Strategic Culture: Framework for Analysis', papers prepared for a conference on 'Strategic Culture and Conflict Resolution in the Asia-Pacific Region', Langkawi Island, Malaysia, 14-17 August 1994. The 'Framework' is reproduced as an appendix to the thesis.

War Two represented the first major defeat for the country in war, and of course also featured the only use of nuclear weapons.[90] Defeat was then followed by occupation and the attempted imposition of external values by the occupying forces. The paper provided an introductory discussion of the effect of these events on Japanese strategic culture, and focused on how change could occur in strategic culture in the light of shattering events and outside interference. These are issues that could profitably be pursued in greater depth. The paper on Australia, meanwhile, focused on the strategic culture of white Australia, taking the view that the aboriginal population had quite different views on the use of force, and also saw the white Australian strategic culture as dominated by masculine values. Along with a distinct aboriginal culture, therefore, a culture informed by feminine values coexisted with the dominant strategic culture.[91] This suggests some lines of enquiry which might be pursued into sub-cultures.

Ultimately, the project offered a starting point for the comparative study of the strategic cultures of the region, and put more 'empirical flesh' on the concept of strategic culture. It provided a systematic framework suggesting features of a country's history, geography and political culture at which strategic culture analysts might look in an attempt to identify the key sources and elements of its strategic culture. It did not, however, propose any methodological approach to strategic culture.

1994 also saw the publication of Charles Kupchan's *The Vulnerability of Empire*, in which strategic culture - understood as 'deeply embedded conceptions and notions of national security that take root among elites and public alike' - was again a key concept.[92] The concern of the study was with how great powers engage in self-defeating behaviour,

[90] Naoko Sajima, 'An Outlook on Japan's Strategic Culture on the Way to Modernization and Democratization', draft of a paper prepared for a conference on 'Strategic Culture and Conflict Resolution in the Asia-Pacific Region', Langkawi Island, Malaysia, 14-17 August 1994.
[91] Graeme Cheeseman, 'White Australia's Strategic Culture', draft of a paper prepared for a conference on 'Strategic Culture and Conflict Resolution in the Asia-Pacific Region', Langkawi Island, Malaysia, 14-17 August 1994.
[92] Charles A. Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 5.

becoming either too competitive - as with Japan in the late 1930s and early 1940s - or too co-operative - as with Britain and France in the 1930s. Neo-realist analysis, the dominant mode of international politics, could not account for such behaviour. It tended to focus on how power ought to be understood and acquired, not on how state governments and their citizens actually thought about power. The latter was the stuff of strategic culture, which shaped grand strategy, the setting of strategic preferences, and the acceptability of behaviour. As an unwieldy concept, strategic culture was often left out of the analysis by neo-realists. By looking at strategic cultures, Kupchan hoped to modify the neo-realist model by accounting for how states failed to adjust properly to new alignments in the balance of power, how they misperceived their new status.[93] Although concerned with attitudes and beliefs, and how culture affects perception of reality, Kupchan was looking more for a universal process through which misperception occurred in particular circumstances than he was at national variation, which is the usual aim of strategic culture research. However, he did note the importance of historical events in shaping beliefs. British and French strategic cultures, for example, were influenced by experience of World War One in their reaction to threats in the interwar period to their security, preferring co-operative to competitive behaviour.

Kupchan noted the difficulties known to attend research into culture. It was often a residual variable, turned to when other modes of explanation had failed. Culture was difficult to define: in particular, it was important to separate in the definition behaviour from the beliefs supposed to explain it, or else tautology resulted. Culture was also difficult to measure and faced methodological problems which 'threaten to mire any cultural argument in intractable dispute over conceptual and evidentiary issues'.[94] If cultures changed slowly, then their effect tended to be non-falsifiable, since it is impossible to test a counterfactual - whether behaviour would have been different if a different culture had been in place. Kupchan proposed a narrow definition of culture to make

[93] See *ibid*, pp. 2-15.
[94] *Ibid*, p. 26.

matters easier. Snyder's definition was so broad as to be untestable. Kupchan therefore focused on the 'images and symbols that shape how a polity conceives of the relationship between empire and national security'.[95] The hope was that this would maximise the 'tradeoff between rigor and richness'.[96] His conclusion was that intuitively strategic culture seemed an important variable. It had however been 'sorely understudied', partly because of the difficulty of doing so. The paradox was that 'what makes the notion of strategic culture problematic and unwieldy - its focus on deeply embedded assumptions and collective self-images - is precisely what makes it appealing'.[97]

In 1995 Eric Herring brought strategic culture into his analysis of the crisis behaviour of the United States and the Soviet Union, in a doctoral dissertation now published in book form.[98] Herring wanted to bring in both strategic culture and psychological factors to complicate the unproblematic assumption of rationality in crisis decision-makers in the early part of his book. A strategic culture would provide decision-makers with a simplified image of the complex world they faced. Acting on the basis of that image, decision-makers might be blind to some of the complexities of the world and so behave in ways 'rational' in terms of their image of the world but 'non-rational' in terms of the reality. On some occasions, the distorting effect of a strategic culture could actually alter outcomes. On other occasions it might merely 'warp the processes leading to the same outcome'.[99]

Analysis of crises tended, Herring argued, to assume rationality. Perfect rationality was unattainable, but the assumption might be a reasonable one in many cases. In some it would not be, both where psychological processes operated regardless of culture, and where culture affected the ends desired and the means employed by decision-makers. In

[95] *Ibid*, p. 28.
[96] *Ibid*, p. 29.
[97] *Ibid*, p. 27 and 490.
[98] Eric Herring, *Danger and Opportunity: Explaining International Crisis Outcomes* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).
[99] *Ibid*, pp. 62-63.

addition, ethnocentrism could lead to incomprehension of the cultures of others and so affect outcomes: either because other states, through a mirror-imaging process, were assumed to be the same as the decision-maker's own, or, more often, because other states were caricatured and demonised. Sensitivity to strategic cultures could protect against these errors, though it could also lead to insensitivity to the potential for change - witness Colin Gray's unequivocal view, undermined by Gorbachev's reforms, that change in the Soviet strategic culture was unthinkable.

Herring argued that studies of strategic culture could take two forms. First was an essentially descriptive search for understanding of a group's attitudes to the use of force. Second was a more analytical search for explanation, in the social science tradition. Without dismissing the importance of the former, and aware that the line between the two was not hard and fast, Herring placed himself within the second tradition. He saw strategic culture as possessing explanatory utility in a number of respects. Acting as a prism to the world, it could shape perceptions of it and affect the setting of strategic preferences. It could make certain courses of action more acceptable or thinkable than others. Or, as a legitimizing discourse, it could justify behaviour based on unrelated motivations. However, new generations of decision-makers, if socialised into this discourse, could come to believe in it and act accordingly.

While some social scientists preferred to see cultural explanations as lacking in research economy and therefore residual categories to be fallen back on when others failed to explain events, Herring wanted to make strategic culture a central part of his analysis. As an example of its role he cited kamikaze attacks. Unthinkable in terms of US strategic culture, they were therefore not predicted in the United States; thinkable in the Japanese culture, they were carried out, though only when the military situation reached a certain point. Culture then was only part of the explanation. And since the Japanese ultimately surrendered, too much should not be made of the cultural predisposition against surrender. Herring was at pains to stress that the role of strategic culture should not be exaggerated.

He found that strategic concepts such as crisis management and deterrence were not understood significantly differently in the West and in China and the Soviet Union. To exaggerate the differences, as the literature tended to do, could undermine the usefulness of the strategic culture approach.

In his conclusions, strategic culture formed one factor, but not a central one, in explaining crises. The strength of the motivation of the parties involved in a crisis was a critical factor in determining whether deterrence of compellence could succeed. All parties, not just, as the strategic culture literature suggests, those from the West, attempted nuanced crisis signalling. However, signals were not always interpreted accurately. The military balance was significant, but more important was the extent to which parties to crises were averse to war. The less averse to war parties were, the less likely they were to be concerned by a military balance not in their favour. Strategic culture could play a part in determining the degree of war aversion, as in the case of increasing aversion to casualties in the United States since the Vietnam War. Strategic culture was also linked to the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons, which constrained decision-makers during crises, even where they themselves did not share the belief that nuclear use should be avoided. However, an argument against referring to the taboo as a strategic cultural factor is that it was not country specific. Strategic culture was again a factor in the analogies employed by different states. Misunderstanding arose when governments reasoned on the basis of different analogies, so that good crisis behaviour could be helped by mutual strategic cultural understanding of the analogies employed. However, strategic culture could not be used to predict behaviour since it worked in interaction with the context. In different contexts, the same strategic culture could produce different behaviour.

The most recent work on strategic culture is also, thus far, the most thorough and methodologically sophisticated. This has been carried out by Alastair Iain Johnston.[100]

[100] See especially Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture', *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 32-64; and Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Johnston's book makes a useful last stop in this literature survey, not only because of the depth of its treatment, but also because he provides an overview of the literature. Johnston classified strategic culture writing as belonging to one of three generations. The first, which included the likes of Snyder and Gray, occurred in the early 1980s in the context of the Soviet-US strategic competition. It looked at differences in the strategies of these states and ascribed them to political culture, geography, historical experiences and other factors. This was a methodologically messy generation, with numerous dependent and independent variables for analysis. It was unable to measure the effect of culture on behaviour, relative to other variables. Authors tended to see one set of beliefs resulting from one set of experiences and producing one set of behaviour. This was also a determinist generation, Johnston argued, with the exception of Snyder. It produced 'overdetermined, hence analytically useless, explanations of behavior'.[101] Too many elements went into strategic culture, which could be separated out into distinct variables, and too much was determined by it. Nothing was left out so it could not be falsified. Finally, the first generation was criticised by Johnston for being unclear on the sources of strategic culture. Which historical periods should be examined? Which sorts of sources - official documents, popular artefacts - should be consulted? How is the culture transmitted, and how does it change? How is the strategic culture related to culture more generally? The first generation of literature did not adequately answer such questions.[102]

The second generation, a prominent member of which was Bradley Klein, operated in the mid-1980s in a more Gramscian tradition, differentiating between a symbolic strategic culture and an operational one, the former being used to confirm the legitimacy of elites and their strategic preferences. Strategic culture here was a tool of hegemony, or perhaps it could be seen as setting the language of debate. Johnston made two main criticisms of this literature. First, it assumed that all elites behaved similarly, and in a realpolitik fashion. It did not look for cross-national differences. Second, it ignored the

[101] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 11.
[102] On the first generation, see *ibid*, pp. 5-15.

extent to which elites could be socialised into the hegemonic culture and be influenced by it rather than manipulating it.[103]

The third generation, including writers not using the term 'strategic culture' itself, has been emerging in the 1990s. One representative was Charles Kupchan. This generation looked at a wider range of cases and focused more narrowly on dependent variables such as particular decisions so as to permit more useful empirical testing of the concept. It sought to explain choices not explained by neo-realist thinking. In order to preserve the analytical distinction between dependent and independent variables, this generation's definition of strategic culture omitted any mention of behaviour, the dependent variable to be explained. In general, the sources of strategic culture are regarded more as recent experience than deeper history. Relevant beliefs concern the nature of war and of international politics, views on technology, on the relationship of the state, the military establishment and society. Some writers are more influenced by post-modern or constructivist approaches, others prefer positivistic methods. All try to test the effect of strategic culture against other variables.

The problems identified by Johnston with this generation were, first, that it ignored the effect of more deeply rooted historical factors in shaping strategic beliefs, in preference for recent experiences. Second, testing strategic culture against neo-realism is problematic, because neo-realism does not suggest particular outcomes. Thirdly, this generation omits consideration of the possibility of distinct operational and symbolic strategic cultures. Fourth, it appears closer to belief systems in seeing culture as quick to change. Fifth, seeing culture as a lens, as setting the range of choices, leaves the need for an intervening variable to explain particular outcomes. Finally, there is more room in this less deterministic approach for individuals not wholly socialised into the culture to operate in ways at variance with it, weakening the utility of the concept and leaving strategic culture

[103] On the second generation, see *ibid*, pp. 15-18.

as more of a contextual than an explanatory variable.[104]

Overall, he argued that strategic culture writing had been less than rigorous. It had left the concept of strategic culture 'remarkably undefined'.[105] Broadly, strategic culture was seen as being concerned with patterns in the strategic behaviour of states, influenced by unique sets of preferences, themselves the product of early formative experiences of the state and their cultural, political and philosophical characteristics as they had developed over time. Other variables were given meaning only when seen through the lens of strategic culture, which constrained state action. Change in the strategic culture was slow and lagged behind 'objective' conditions. Incompatible with the idea of universal rationality, strategic culture was compatible with ideas of limited or bounded rationality in which beliefs set the parameters of debate and historical analogies and metaphors guided thinking.[106]

If strategic culture was compatible with notions of bounded rationality, it did however pose a challenge to the neo-realist paradigm, which dominates the discipline of international relations. Neo-realism regarded states as 'functionally undifferentiated units' seeking to optimize their utility. This acultural and ahistorical approach has been modified by some to allow for universal processes of misperception, organisational politics and decision-making, but these were 'auxiliary' theories plugging gaps in the neo-realist paradigm and not fundamentally challenging it. Strategic culture did challenge structural or neo-realists to explain variations in strategic behaviour. For strategic culturalists, the corollary obtained: they need to explain similarities in the behaviour of culturally different states.[107]

Turning to the literature on Chinese strategic thinking and policy, Johnston noted

[104] On the third generation, see *ibid*, pp. 18-22.
[105] *Ibid*, p. 1.
[106] *Ibid*.
[107] *Ibid*, pp. 2-3.

that it paid considerable attention to the effect of history. Even if few writers referred explicitly to strategic culture, many invoked the concept. There was general agreement that there existed a Chinese strategic culture, the key features of which were preferences for the strategic defensive and for limited war, and a belief that the use of force was of limited utility. These features were often identified with the writing of Sun Zi, and with Mao, with continuity between the two assumed; and they were contrasted with Western preferences for offensive war and reliance on technology and massive firepower. Johnston complained that, as with the first generation strategic culture literature, this work was plagued by methodological flaws. It concentrated almost exclusively on Sun Zi, and then only a selective reading of his work; it did not show the link between his and later thinking, nor between beliefs and behaviour. Finally it did not account for the empirical evidence that China had fought in many wars for a state allegedly reluctant to use force.[108]

Having surveyed the existing literatures on strategic culture in general and the Chinese case in particular, Johnston proposed that it made sense to pursue the question of Chinese strategic culture further. Given that the influence of strategic culture in China had been so often asserted but so rarely demonstrated, there was a clear gap to fill. China, moreover, with its relative isolation and continuity of history, was a good case because if no persistent Chinese strategic culture could be shown to exist, then the prospects of discerning one in other states were poor. So the concept of strategic culture could be refined also through an examination of the Chinese case.[109]

Johnston initially set out his own approach to the study of strategic culture, which is, he recognises, a methodologically awkward undertaking. He hoped to avoid the pitfalls uncovered by strategic culture analysis: definitions of culture which are tautological; deterministic ideas about the effect of culture; and flawed research designs which do not separate culture and structure. Instead he seeks a falsifiable notion of strategic culture, the

[108] On the Chinese 'strategic culture' literature, see *ibid*, pp. 22-28.
[109] *Ibid*, p. 29.

formation and development of which can be followed empirically and the impact of which can be assessed relative to other factors. His approach is to begin with the key strategic texts from a formative period of strategic culture, looking for the existence of consistent beliefs. Next it is necessary to show that many decision-makers share these beliefs, and that strategic action is consistent with them.[110]

For Johnston, strategic culture consists of two basic elements. First is a 'central paradigm' of beliefs about the nature of conflict, the nature of enemies and the efficacy of violence. Secondly, derived from this paradigm should be 'a ranked set of strategic preferences' which are 'collectively shared by decision-makers'. Tracing these preferences back to the historical experience of the state, and forward to their influence on strategic behaviour, is the aim of his work. He set out to determine to what extent a consistent and persistent Chinese strategic culture can be identified, and to what extent it has affected Chinese use of force.[111] More expansively, he saw strategic culture as

> ...an integrated system of symbols (i.e., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors, etc.) that acts to establish pervasive and long-standing grand strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious.[112]

Johnston hoped to devise an empirically testable conception of strategic culture and to isolate its effects. The first step was to establish that a strategic culture exists over time, and is shared by enough actors, for it to be considered a major factor. To show the influence of strategic culture on behaviour, Johnston wanted to trace it from its sources through a socialization process to the values and assumptions of decision-makers. With regard to the first stage, identifying beliefs, Johnston chose the Ming period, 1368-1644, because decision-makers then were heirs to a particular philosophical and textual tradition

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[110] *Ibid*.
[111] *Ibid*, pp. *ix-x*.
[112] *Ibid*, p. 36.

at a relatively insulated period of time. Various strategic objects were possible in which to observe the strategic culture: documents, writings, images, military ceremonies to name some. In the Chinese case, the documents he used for analysis were the Seven Military Classics, an obvious starting point as the repository of strategic knowledge and a basis for transmitting ideas.[113] These were examined for their principal assumptions about the role of war, the nature of conflict with the enemy and the efficacy of violence. Also he used symbols: words, names, events which had meanings, though these could change over time. It was therefore important to triangulate, to corroborate beliefs from different sources.

Beliefs having been identified, the next stage is to test their effect on behaviour. Johnston identified various possible ways in which the two might be related. It could be, at one extreme, that strategic culture pointed to one particular option only, so that no other factors were needed to explain choices. At the other extreme, strategic culture could merely be instrumental, used to justify policy caused by other factors. A modified version of this approach sees strategic culture, although beginning life as an instrument used by elites to justify their actions, eventually entrapping them as new generations come to believe in the culture or masses require action in accordance with it. Between these extremes, the strategic culture might set a limited range of available options, with other variables required to explain which particular option is selected. Or the strategic culture might produce a ranked set of preferences which form a prism through which other factors are perceived. This option was the one Johnston intended to pursue, testing it against non-cultural factors, especially structural, to see if it gives different results. A final possibility, however, was that strategic culture affected the decision-making process itself: it affected *how* decisions were taken, rather than *which* decisions were taken.[114]

The question then was whether decision-makers operated according to a ranked set of preferences, consistent across different objects of analysis. If not, no strategic

[113] *Ibid*, pp. 39-40.
[114] *Ibid*, pp. 53-54.

culture could be identified. Noting that a comparative study would be helpful, Johnston argued that in the first instance it was necessary to demonstrate consistency in beliefs over time in one country.[115] His findings were interesting. They were that there were two Chinese strategic cultures, a Confucian-Mencian culture exhibiting the features often claimed for Chinese strategic culture; and a parabellum culture, resembling the Western realpolitik model.[116] The parabellum culture, downplayed by analysts, was the dominant strain. This raises a difficulty for Johnston, because the Chinese parabellum strategic culture leads to precisely the behaviour expected by structural realists. Thus testing strategic culture against structural realism is not possible, Chinese distinctiveness is challenged and the value of strategic culture severely compromised. Indeed, structural realists would say that Johnston's findings confirm the critical importance of structures and the marginal importance of unit level factors. However, while Johnston accepts that his findings pose difficulties for strategic culturalists in that they diminish cross-cultural difference, nevertheless he sees value in the strategic culture approach and difficulties for neo-realists also. Johnston did discern a deeply rooted set of cultural beliefs in China, transmitted to new generations. These beliefs were not therefore 'natural', but rather learned, and this opened up the possibility at least that they could be unlearned or that it had not been learned in other countries. Neo-realists just assumed the existence of realpolitik beliefs. Johnston's work showed them being formed at a particular time and passed on to new waves of decision-makers.[117]

Conclusion

This survey of the strategic culture literature shows that, since its coinage in 1977, the term strategic culture has been taken up by a variety of writers. They have conceived of strategic culture in quite different ways. There is common ground in the general sense that all writers are concerned with the set of values and beliefs held by groups about the

[115] *Ibid*, p. 55.
[116] *Ibid*, p. 249.
[117] *Ibid*, pp. 258-66.

strategic realm, and the relevance of these to their behaviour in that realm. However, often those who have employed the term have not built on previous work, simply proceeding on the basis of their own understanding of what strategic culture should mean. Utilisation of the term strategic culture has not united the different writers around any one view of what exactly strategic culture is, how it is formed, how it operates, and how and why it should be studied. To study strategic culture no more commits the scholar to any particular definition, methodology or purpose than to study such subjects as revolution, war or trade.

Alastair Johnston's division of the literature into three categories captures some of the differences in approach between early, and on the whole unsophisticated work, and later, more refined studies. However, the literature can also be divided along other lines which give an indication of the similarities and contrasts between different writers. Two principal fissures in the literature emerge when we ask *why* strategic culture should be studied, and *how* it should be studied. Writers like Colin Gray and Yitzhak Klein operate broadly within the traditional realist paradigm of strategic studies, the 'how-to-do-it' guide.[118] With conflict inevitable given the nature of humankind and/or the anarchic international system, states must act to secure themselves against possible aggressors. Understanding their own strategic culture as well as the strategic cultures of potential enemies enables more effective defence planning. These writers are critical of the realist tendency towards black-boxing states, that is, assuming that their internal organisation and historical experience do not significantly affect their behaviour. They are critical of assumptions that a useful strategic rationality exists which governs the behaviour of all state decision-makers. However, these writers do not see strategic culture as posing a fundamental challenge to realist thinking. They do not question realist and neo-realist assumptions that the state is the central actor on the international stage, that the international system is essentially conflictual, or that states must maximise power to ensure their security. States may remain undifferentiated functionally, but vary in how they carry

[118] This is discussed in Chapter One of the thesis.

out their function of achieving security through maximising military power in an anarchic world. Charles Kupchan more explicitly uses strategic culture not as a replacement for realism in the analysis of state behaviour, but rather a refinement of it.

Ken Booth offers a differing view of why strategic culture should be studied in his work with the other participants in the 'Strategic Culture in the Asia-Pacific' project. That project linked culture explicitly with conflict resolution. The aim was to assess the extent to which understanding of strategic cultures could improve prospects for peaceful settlement of disputes, rather than effective prosecution of hostilities. Here the potential for change in strategic culture is a crucial consideration. Studying strategic culture has the potential to show that particular beliefs about the use of force are not natural or inevitable, but the product of specific times, places and circumstances. If some cultures have managed to live more peacefully than others, then lessons could be learned. If people are alerted to the possibility that their core values about the use of force derive from particular historical experiences, then change, in more peaceful directions, can become conceivable. Strategic culture here does not shore up the realist project, it undermines it. Progress may be facilitated from strategic cultures, understood here as mindsets in which war is seen as inevitable and force as a legitimate instrument of policy, to pacific cultures, understood as mindsets in which force has no legitimacy.

There is a distinction which can be drawn, therefore, between strategic culture minimalists and maximalists.[119] The minimalists work largely within neo-realism but do not believe that examination of the system level will answer all our questions. They drop their sights down to units within the system, challenging some of neo-realism's tenets, but still looking to prepare their states to cope with the menace of the anarchical system. Minimalists-plus, or 'sophisticated realists', meanwhile, may still broadly accept the logic of anarchy, but hope to use understanding of strategic cultures minimise conflict within the

[119] On this point see Booth and Macmillan, 'Strategic Culture: Concept and Development'.

international system.[120] Improved, mutual cultural understanding may avert wars resulting from misperception. It may facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes. It may offer greater chances to mitigate the security dilemma and to construct security regimes. Strategic culture maximalists, however, go further. War is seen as a cultural phenomenon, one which can be unlearned.[121] Security dilemmas can be transcended and security communities can be constructed. The 'logic of anarchy' can be overcome and states can live peacefully even within anarchy. To use slightly different language, it could be argued that some writers are interested in military culture, or the ways in which armed forces and ministries of defence think about using force, while not questioning that the use and threat of force are necessary. Others examine defence or strategic cultures, broadening out to the level of grand strategy and the views of the civilian government, rather than just military specialists, and asking about how to avoid wars and settle disputes peacefully. Security culture looks at notions of what constitutes security and whether states and people can unlearn the use and threat of force. In all these cases, however, those interested in culture challenge narrow views that the nature of the system determines the actions of its units, and that all the units behave in accordance with the same rationality. Culture allows for greater variety of motivation and behaviour than crude neo-realist or rational choice philosophies.

Bradley Klein also employs strategic culture as part of an explicit critique of realism. He is keen to historicise the implicit assumptions of realist thinking, to show that states have not always been regarded as the legitimate or primary actors in the international system, nor need they always be so regarded. Strategic culture here becomes the vehicle through which state elites sustain legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens. If the realist thinking embodied in US strategic culture is exposed as a cultural construct rather than the only rational response to the external environment, then alternative constructs are

[120] The term 'sophisticated realist' comes from Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979), p. 177.
[121] On war as a cultural phenomenon, see Ken Booth, 'War, Security and Strategy: towards a doctrine for stable peace', in Ken Booth, (ed), *New Thinking About Strategy and International Security* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 354-55.

possible. On related lines, Alastair Johnston, although finding that Chinese strategic culture closely resembles the sort of realpolitik approach with which realists would be comfortable, nevertheless argues that the roots of Chinese strategic culture can be traced to particular times and places. Rather than simply assuming that states will behave in realpolitik fashion, Johnston believes that the strategic culture approach shows how they got to that point, and implies both that different circumstances could have produced other outcomes and that learning of new thinking is possible. Klein and Johnston, therefore, also challenge neo-realist thinking.

Writers are divided, therefore, on *why* strategic culture should be studied. On the question of methods, or *how* to study strategic culture, there are also a variety of approaches. Some writers pay little or no attention to methodology. In the case of Stephen Szabo's work on German strategic culture, for instance, the suspicion lurks that strategic culture merely provides a reasonably fashionable label for work which might otherwise appear run-of-the-mill. His work is not anchored in the literature nor is it characterised by any concerted investigation of what is meant by strategic culture. The term 'strategic culture' may well be borrowed to lend dignity and suggest sophistication to work which is essentially impressionistic and concerned with diverse subjects. The nebulous nature of culture renders it attractive to such borrowing.

Other writers exhibit greater awareness of the methodological difficulties inherent in cultural analysis. If a culture is intangible, if its effects are indirect, how can you establish its existence, origins and operation? Earlier writers on the subject, as might be expected, were more concerned with outlining the general themes of the strategic culture approach and establishing the need for such an approach than with laying down precise rules for its study. However, as strategic culture gained acceptance as a valid and valuable concept, refinement was necessary. Colin Gray led the way in pointing out some pitfalls awaiting strategic culture. Gray's own approach, which he calls an empirical-inductive one, sought to derive general statements about Soviet and US strategic cultures from

observation of their behaviour.[122] However, he did not develop this in any detail. The Asia-Pacific project organisers set out to develop a comparative approach, but recommended little in the way of methodology.

Johnston is critical of much strategic culture writing because of its lack of attention to methods. For Johnston, if it is to be useful, strategic culture must be falsifiable, its effects susceptible to proof and measurement relative to other factors. While later writers like Kupchan and Herring might try to build strategic culture into explanations of strategic behaviour involving other factors, much of the first generation fails the test. Johnston's is a fiercely positivistic method rooted in social science positivistic traditions. If strategic cultural explanations cannot be falsified, they are of little value in this view of methodology. Snyder is critical of much strategic culture work for similar reasons.

Here a fracture appears in the strategic culture work. Both Gray and Booth are critical in their work of such 'rigorous' approaches. Gray anticipates that there will be those in what he terms the 'republic of social science' who will quickly point out the methodological sins committed by cultural analysts, while Booth, as noted, sees a trade-off between rigour and richness in theory.[123] It may be argued that such non-quantifiable phenomena as cultures are not amenable to social scientific study, that scientific standards of proof are inappropriate. Strategic culture studies must then constitute more of an art than a science. Thus strategic culture analysts can be found at both ends of a methodological axis which cuts through international relations scholarship: from an extreme positivism at one end, to a hermeneutic, interpretive method at the other.[124]

Two important areas for further research emerge from the above analysis. The first concerns the methodology by which strategic culture can be studied. In particular, can a

[122] Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, p. 34.
[123] *Ibid*, p. *xii*.
[124] See John Baylis and N.J. Rengger, 'Introduction: Theories, Methods, and Dilemmas in World Politics', in John Baylis and N.J. Rengger, *Dilemmas of World Politics: International Issues in Changing World* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 6.

positivist methodology accommodate cultural analysis, or is a more interpretive approach required? The second concerns the relationship between cultural explanations and explanations based on the effects of structures or rational calculations of interest. This area involves a further series of questions also regarding how strategic cultures operate. What do they explain? There is widespread consensus that strategic cultures do not determine policy. Rather they produce tendencies and predispositions; they form a perceptual lens or prism through which strategic issues are seen; they set the bounds of debate; they affect which questions will be asked as much as which answers will be reached. But to explain any policy, other factors must be taken into consideration. Strategic culture alone is insufficient. Strategic culture can be seen as different in kind from other modes of explanation, a more basic factor. For example, the bureaucratic politics approach can help explain policy, but organisations function within cultural contexts; and the impact of 'technological push' will depend upon cultural attitudes towards technology. Exactly how strategic cultures operate remains open to question. Further discussion of these issues is necessary.

A number of other questions arise from this survey of the strategic culture literature. First there is the question of whose culture is to be studied. One approach focuses narrowly on the 'military establishment' of a state, while others broaden out to the 'national strategic community', to the political as well as the military elite. Other writers have considered the culture of the nation as a whole. Which is the most appropriate level on which to focus? Also to be taken into account here is the possibility that distinct sub-cultures may exist, differing in important respects from the dominant culture of a national group.

A second question asks what 'culture' means. Included in the various definitions are values, attitudes, ideas and perceptions, all rather different entities. But how exactly are they distinct from, and how related to, each other? And in what ways are these entities distinct from, and related to, emotional responses, habits, patterns of behaviour, and

modes of thought, which also feature in some definitions? In particular, inclusion of behaviour in definitions of culture has been criticised for mixing up what is to be explained with what does the explaining. Further, is the culture merely the aggregate of these entities among the group under study, or is it greater than the sum of its parts? Does it exist only in human minds, or should it be conceptualised as an almost autonomous force? For some, the use of the term culture signifies little more than that policy can outlive the circumstances and reasoning which gave rise to it within institutions, while others refer to culture to indicate that strategy is formed within and gives expression to the broader cultural attributes of a society.

Another issue regards the content of strategic cultures. Which beliefs and attitudes is it important to identify? Some writers take strategic culture to be about attitudes to the use of force, or threat thereof. Others argue that it concerns attitudes towards the fundamental and enduring components of defence policy, or the political objectives which the use of force is supposed to serve, or how to achieve these objectives. Others focus more broadly on the overall security policy of states. In part, this reflects some of the concerns discussed above. Realist strategic culturalists who assume the inevitability of conflict deal with a narrower range of beliefs, excluding those about the nature of international politics and security. Their work might be described as strategic culture, rather than security culture, because of the narrowness of their focus. The term security culture is more appropriate for the work of those who open up for investigation beliefs about other dimensions of security - environmental, economic, societal and so on.[125]

Further crucial questions ask: what are the origins of strategic cultures? How are habits and attitudes formed? Various sources of strategic culture are identified in the literature. A state's history, especially its military history and experience, its culture, especially its political culture, its international relationships, its resources and the

[125] The best known discussion of the various dimensions of security is Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, second edition, 1991).

technology available to it, and the organisation of its strategic decision-making apparatus have all been cited as roots of strategic culture. But do these factors determine strategic cultures, the attitudes, behaviour, and values of elites? Do new generations come to hold similar attitudes through rational consideration of the same factors? Do they perceive afresh the implications of these factors, or are they socialised into old holding perceptions? Questions surround how the relevant attitudes are formed, if and how they are sustained and transmitted require more thought.

This point brings in the issue of change in strategic cultures. Most writers believe that cultures do change, but only gradually, except where some dramatic event intervenes. A criticism levelled at the strategic culture approach is that it may be too insensitive to change, overstressing coherence and consistency. Another open question here is whether regimes may consciously manipulate strategic cultural beliefs in order to persuade their populations of the authority of the regime itself or the legitimacy of the policies it pursues. Overall, there are several unresolved issues regarding how cultures persist and how change can occur.

The above questions indicate the main areas of the concept of strategic culture which require theoretical refinement. In seeking such refinement, some commentators have stressed the need for an interdisciplinary approach. Few have done much to follow this through. Yet to ignore other disciplines and subjects which could offer valuable insights may be to waste time generating the same insights, or to fall unnecessarily into the same traps. Strategic culture analysts could end up reinventing the wheel, and perhaps even a less efficient version of it. The obvious starting point in the search for insights from other disciplines is with political culture, a concept with a long history within political science and a large literature attached to it. Political culture is referred to often by writers on strategic culture, who see it as a related enterprise. The political culture literature draws on the disciplines of sociology, psychology and anthropology, and so may provide short cuts to the concerns of these disciplines, which, as it has been argued below, are

relevant for strategic culture. Chapter Three therefore examines the literature on political culture, seeking answers to the questions identified above.

Chapter Three: Political Culture

Serious academic study of the subject of political culture began in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Around this time several important studies of the concept were produced, and political culture went on to become a key concept within the discipline of political science.[1] By the mid-1970s, however, interest in the subject had waned and criticism of it began to mount. It is indicative of the state of thinking on political culture that few major book length studies of the concept were written between then and the late 1980s. A significant exception to this generalisation is to be found in the literature on Communist states, where the concept was taken up and developed further by a number of scholars in the 1970s and early 1980s.[2] Communist studies aside, during this period work on political culture often took the form of journal articles lamenting the failure of the concept to live up to its early promise and suggesting less ambitious ways in which it might be studied which would lead to its rehabilitation.[3] By the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, interest in political culture had revived, with the publication of new books leading some commentators to talk of the return to political culture.[4]

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[1] Among the most important were Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); and Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, (eds), *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).

[2] See Archie Brown and Jack Gray, (eds), *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* (London: Macmillan, second edition, 1979); Archie Brown, (ed), *Political Culture and Communist Studies* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984); and Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979).

[3] For instance, see David J. Elkins and Richard E.B. Simeon, 'A Cause in Search of its Effect, or What Does Political Culture Explain?', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (January 1979), pp. 127-45; David D. Laitin and Aaron Wildavsky, 'Political Culture and Political Preferences', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (June 1988), pp. 589-96; and Lowell Dittmer, 'Political Culture and Political Symbolism: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis', *World Politics*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (October 1976), pp. 552-83.

[4] New books include John R. Gibbins, (ed), *Contemporary Political Culture: Politics in a Postmodern Age* (London: Sage, 1989); and Stephen Welch, *The Concept of Political Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993). Gabriel Almond comments on the recent resurgence of interest in political culture, in 'The Return to Political Culture', foreword to Larry Diamond, (ed), *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1993).

That strategic culture emerged and was promoted at a time when scholars were turning their backs on political culture perhaps implies a lack of awareness of the fate of political culture. Just as those scholars who advocate the strategic culture approach criticise other strategists for failing to take adequate account of other disciplines such as history, so they could be criticised for not taking sufficient note of what was going on in the discipline of political science. Assuming, as many writers have, that political culture is a concept closely related to strategic culture (though the exact nature of that relationship still needs to be made clear), it makes much sense to consider the development of political culture before going any further with the study of strategic culture.

There are indeed many parallels between strategic culture and political culture. Each is concerned with subjective orientations: values, beliefs, attitudes. Each regards national or group experiences and history as having a role in the formation of these beliefs. And each looks at the impact of these beliefs and values on behaviour. What can students of strategic culture learn from the political culture experience? The aim of this chapter is to identify in the political culture literature the insights, approaches and cautions relevant to the study of strategic culture. The chapter will first briefly introduce the concept of political culture. It will then describe and account for the rise, fall and recent resurgence of the concept. The chapter will next return to the questions identified in the previous chapter which scholars of strategic culture are grappling with, and ask whether scholars of political culture have faced similar questions, and if so whether and how they have been able to overcome them.

Introduction

Prior to examining the nature of the work done on political culture, it is important to consider how the concept has been defined and understood. Unfortunately, the political culture literature has failed to produce any universally or even widely accepted definition of political culture. While this is not an unusual state of affairs in the social sciences, the great number and diversity of definitions of political culture which have been advanced represent a major difficulty for students of the subject.[5] This difficulty will be discussed in detail later. For the moment it is sufficient to offer a few examples of definitions of the concept which show roughly the ground which political culture covers and delineate the main features of the approach.

Two of the shortest and most straightforward definitions of political culture are offered by Dennis Kavanagh and Stephen White. For the former, it is 'a shorthand expression to denote the emotional and attitudinal environment within which the political system operates'.[6] For the latter, political culture is 'the attitudinal and behavioural matrix within which the political system is located'.[7] Archie Brown more expansively refers to political culture as 'the subjective perception of history and politics, the fundamental beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectations which are the product of the specific historical experience of nations and groups'.[8] Lucian Pye observes that different national communities will produce their own 'distinctive and persisting style, manner, and substantive forms of politics'.[9] Finally, Kavanagh has elsewhere written that 'every political system is embedded in a political culture', which consisted of the 'values, beliefs, and emotions that give meaning to political behaviour'.[10]

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[5] See Ruth Lane, 'Political Culture: Residual Category or General Theory?', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (October 1992), pp. 362-63.
[6] Dennis Kavanagh, *Political Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 10.
[7] White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*, p. 1.
[8] Brown and Gray, p. 1.
[9] Lucian W. Pye, 'Introduction', in Pye and Verba, p. 3.
[10] Dennis Kavanagh, *British Politics: Continuities and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, second edition, 1990), p. 49.

These definitions give a flavour of how the concept is understood. Though there are differences of wording and emphasis, political culture loosely covers the ideas, values, feelings, beliefs, emotions and attitudes of citizens concerning their political system. The political culture approach asserts that to understand a political system and its operation it is necessary, but not sufficient, to know about the constitution on which it is based and the institutions which comprise it. It is necessary, but again not sufficient, to identify the interests of the actors within the system. It is also crucial to comprehend the beliefs and values held by the people whom the system encompasses in order to understand their behaviour. It is generally assumed that there will be differences between the values and beliefs of populations of different states, and some common ground within states; though it is acknowledged that certain groups within a state may differ in their beliefs from others, leading to the existence of sub-cultures, or that a state's political culture may be fragmented. Also there may be commonalities in the political cultures of states with different political systems. Studies in political culture also deal with how the attitudes of populations are formed. A process of socialisation is described here, in which attitudes and beliefs are passed on to new generations of citizens.

Political Culture: origins of the concept

When and why did political scientists initiate the study of political culture? It should first be noted that, just as it is not argued that strategic culture is a new idea, so it is the case that the role of values, beliefs, attitudes and ways of thinking about politics was a part of writing about politics long before the term itself was coined and before interest in it began to snowball. Indeed, writers on political culture have argued that political culture and its associated concepts - sub-cultures, elites, socialisation - are present at least implicitly in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. For Plato it was important, for example, that young men should be inculcated with the values which would sustain stable and democratic

government.[11]

More recent political writings which it is argued focus attention on the role of attitudes and values include those of Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau and de Tocqueville. The last-named regarded the 'moral and intellectual condition of a people' as a significant factor for study. The maintenance of democracy in the United States could not simply be explained by the quality of the institutions established there, de Tocqueville wrote, but owed much in addition to the habits, the notions, the opinions and character of the population.[12] Though none of these political thinkers actually used the term 'political culture', all were concerned with matters which would today be regarded as aspects of political culture. It appears, in fact, that the first use of the term 'political culture' dates back to the late eighteenth century, when it was employed by Herder, who also emphasised the importance of values and attitudes as political variables.[13] However, it was not until the late 1950s and early 1960s that the study of political culture became widespread and fashionable on a major scale. What accounts for the growth of interest in the political culture approach at that time?

The initial impetus given to the study of political culture was an article published by Gabriel Almond in 1956, in which he identified the concept of political culture as one of a number derived from sociology and anthropology which could usefully be applied to the comparative study of political systems.[14] However, it was the publication in 1963 of *The Civic Culture*, by Almond and Sidney Verba, which was the first major step towards establishing the political culture approach as part of 'the conceptual vocabulary' and 'the

[11] Gabriel A. Almond, *A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science* (London: Sage, 1990), p. 138.
[12] *Ibid*, pp. 139-40. For a more detailed discussion of de Tocqueville and political culture see James Ceaser, 'Alexis de Tocqueville on Political Science, Political Culture and the Role of the Intellectual', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 79, No. 3 (September 1985), pp. 656-72.
[13] See Archie Brown, 'Introduction' to Brown, p. 1; and see also F.M. Barnard, 'Culture and Political Development: Herder's Suggestive Insights', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (June 1969), pp. 378-97.
[14] Gabriel A. Almond, 'Comparative Political Systems', *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (August 1956), pp. 391-409.

explanatory strategy of political science' and encouraging the production of a substantial literature on the subject.[15]

Three main reasons have been identified by Gabriel Almond for the growth of interest in political culture.[16] The first was that this approach seemed to have the potential to explain problems which were at that time occupying the attention and exercising the minds of political scientists. Prior to World War Two, Western political scientists concerned themselves with little beyond North America and Europe. After the war, however, the process of decolonisation was increasing the number of states in the world to which attention had to be paid. It was also increasing the number of unstable governments in the world. Although newly independent states often copied the political systems of Western democracies, they did not seem to be able to make democracy flourish and stability prevail as happened in the West. Political scientists wanted to know why this was and what would make democracy take hold in the new states, and this required that they investigate more than just the institutions of government which seemed to provide democracy in one state but not in another. It appeared that the attitudes and values of the peoples involved, the political cultures within which institutions operated, also had to be examined.

Moreover, the difficulties facing newly emerging states in the 1950s and 1960s fitted into a wider historical context. The enlightenment had given rise to the belief among liberals, echoing theories of evolution, that progress was inevitable towards prosperous, democratic states with rational governments. Populations would be well educated and looked after by the state and would participate in their political systems. During the nineteenth century it seemed that the experience of the United States and Britain

[15] See Almond, 'The Study of Political Culture', chapter six of his *A Discipline Divided*, p. 142. That chapter provides a summary of the development of the concept of political culture, from the man most closely associated with it.

[16] See Almond, *A Discipline Divided*, pp. 140-42; see also Almond, 'The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept', in Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, (eds), *The Civic Culture Revisited* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown & Company, 1980), pp. 6-16.

confirmed this belief, as political and social reform followed the industrial revolution. However, events in the first half of the twentieth century contradicted the enlightenment view. Two immensely destructive world wars and the rise of authoritarian fascism and communism undermined the complacent notion of steady progress towards participant, stable democracies. The question of what had gone wrong was one with which North American political scientists after 1945 began to grapple.

These then were the research problems to which the political culture approach offered answers. But why should this approach in particular be adopted? The second reason for the rise of political culture studies was the input to political science from other disciplines which was occurring at that time. Almond regards three other disciplines as contributing to the development of a political culture approach. First there was the sociological tradition represented by writers such as Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons; then the social psychological tradition, represented by, among others, Graham Wallas, Walter Lippman and Paul Lazarsfeld; and finally the psycho-cultural tradition of Freud, Theodor Adorno and others.[17]

Sociologists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emphasised the importance of ideas and values in explaining the working of institutions. Durkheim, for example, employed the phrase 'conscience collective', referring to a set of values and beliefs shared by members of a society. Weber is well known for linking the rise of capitalism to the Protestant work ethic, and Talcott Parsons, building on Weber's work, similarly believed that values, feelings and beliefs had to be taken into account when explaining social action.[18]

Social psychologists also were examining instincts, sentiments and attitudes in trying to explain the rise of fascism and aggression by states such as Germany and Japan

[17] Almond, *A Discipline Divided*, p. 142.
[18] Almond, 'The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept', in Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisited*, pp. 11-12.

which resulted in the outbreak of World War Two. Of particular concern was how the attitudes and behaviour of individuals were influenced by those around them in the wider society of which they were a part. Finally, there were anthropologists adapting the work of Freud to the study of groups rather than individuals, and trying to explain the attitudes of these groups 'by childhood socialization patterns, unconscious motivation, and psychological mechanisms'.[19]

In the 1950s and 1960s, therefore, the time when the political culture approach was being nurtured, the study of attitudes, beliefs and values had wide currency within the social sciences, and contributed to the development of this new political science approach. The emphasis on values and attitudes was seen as a useful way to explain some of the problems confronting political scientists at that time.

The third reason for the rise of the political culture approach had to do with its viability. While those who asserted the importance of cultural variables acknowledged that others before them had done so, they were critical of the nature of much of the work done in this area and doubtful of its value, and called for a new approach to the study of political culture. It is important to stress at this point that the study of political culture developed as part of the behavioural revolution in the social sciences. As well as involving a move away from the study of formal institutions to informal patterns of behaviour and belief, behaviouralism also aspired to a much more scientific and positivistic approach to the study of social phenomena. What modern political scientists disliked about the treatment of political culture in older writings was that it was insufficiently analytical. They regarded previous work on political culture or national character, however insightful it may have been, as too reliant on impressions backed up by anecdotes. From their positivistic standpoint they desired to generate hypotheses and to test them against 'evidence which has been collected and analyzed according to accepted canons of scientific

[19] *Ibid*, p. 14.

research'.[20]

Developments in survey methods seemed to have made this possible. Before it had been impossible to identify with any certainty the attitudes of groups as large as national populations. With the precise sampling methods being devised after the war, representative data for large groups could be generated, while the reliability of the data could be enhanced through the employment of modern interview techniques. In addition, advances in statistical techniques helped with the analysis of the data. If the collection of quantifiable data on the attitudes, beliefs and values of national populations was possible, then the political culture approach could be accommodated within the behavioural political science methodology.

Development of the political culture approach

The first major landmark in the political culture literature, Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture*, reflected many of the themes discussed above. Sub-titled *Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, this book contributed to the discussion of why democracy flourished in some but not in other states. It did so by using extensive survey data to identify the main political attitudes and beliefs of the populations of five democratic states: Britain, the United States, Germany, Mexico and Italy.

The authors divided political attitudes into three categories. There were cognitive attitudes, concerned with the knowledge possessed by citizens of the political system; affective attitudes, covering people's feelings about the system; and finally evaluative attitudes, the judgements made by people about their political systems. Then three main types of political culture were identified. In a parochial culture, people were believed to have little knowledge of or expectations about their political system. In a subject culture, while people were expected to know a good deal about the system and make judgements

[20] Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, p. 9.

about it, they would not participate actively in it. Lastly, in a participant political culture, citizens would be well-informed about and actively involved in the system. These were ideal types of culture; most states would probably contain a mix of two or more. The main conclusion reached in the book was that Britain and the United States possessed a civic culture, or 'a pattern of political attitudes and an underlying set of social attitudes that is supportive of a stable democratic process'.[21] By implication at least, if these attitudes could be reproduced in other states, stable democracy could take root there.

Other work on political culture at this time also took as a central theme political development towards democratic status. Subsequently, the work of Almond, Pye, Verba and others came under fire. There were a number of criticisms on methodological grounds which will be dealt with later. Two complaints should be raised immediately, however. The first was that the civic culture work was based too squarely on a British-United States conception of democracy, and on the notion of development; there was an assumption that all other states ought to be aiming to reproduce the institutions and political culture of the United States and Britain. The association of political culture with ethnocentric views of development and democracy did considerable harm to its reputation.[22] The second criticism encountered by the civic culture writers was that the attitudes which they had identified as most appropriate for stable democracy, began to look rather transient. Although Almond and Verba had cautioned that 'our study is but a snapshot in a rapidly changing world', they nevertheless seemed to assume them to be fairly permanent.[23] Later studies of British and American political attitudes found far lower levels of deference, trust and participation and other values which had been identified by the likes of the Almond and Verba study as central pillars of the civic culture. The civic culture approach no longer seemed to explain what was happening in Britain and the USA, further weakening its appeal.[24]

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[21] Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, p. *vii*.
[22] See for instance Jerzy J. Wiatr, 'The Civic Culture from a Marxist-Sociological Perspective', in Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisited*, p. 105; and Gibbins, p. 7.
[23] Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, p. *vii*.
[24] The authors admitted this themselves - see Sidney Verba, 'On Revisiting the Civic Culture: A Personal Postscript', in Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisited*, pp. 399-400. See also Gibbins, p. 8.

A new approach was developed to explain those changes. The work of Inglehart in particular tried to account for new attitudes by bringing generational change into the equation.[25] A new post-material age had arisen, Inglehart argued: a new generation had experienced nothing but peace and prosperity, and valued education, a healthy environment and good quality life-style more highly than security and wealth, the goals of older generations. This new model, according to Gibbins, attracted much less interest than the civic culture one, and not even much negative comment.[26] The political culture approach by the 1980s had gone out of fashion, with no agreement on its value or how to study it. The difficulties which had beset it will be outlined presently. First, however, our attention turns to the realm of Communist studies, where political culture continued to be studied in spite of its wider decline.

Political culture and communist states

There were a number of reasons why, especially with regard to the Soviet Union, investigating political cultures was still seen as a fruitful activity. One reason was that many scholars of Communist states were dissatisfied with the work being produced, which was often based on the assumption that Communist systems could be understood through the examination of the institutions which had been established by the Communist Party and the Marxist-Leninist ideology which it embraced.[27] The political culture approach brought into focus the neglected areas of popular beliefs which were seen as an important variable.

This approach also combated 'what looked like a frightened retreat from history and geography in English-speaking education'.[28] For Stephen White, this was a key concern. He regretted the 'lack of an historical perspective' in the literature on Soviet

[25] Gibbins, pp. 9-10.
[26] *Ibid*.
[27] White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*, p. *ix*.
[28] John Miller, 'Political Culture - Some Perennial Questions Reopened', in Brown, p. 41.

government, and saw the political culture approach as a means to 'redress some of this imbalance by allowing a greater degree of attention to be paid to the historical and national specifity of Soviet politics as well as to the similarities it shares with political systems elsewhere'.[29] There are parallels here with the concerns of the originators of the strategic culture approach, who, it was argued above, similarly felt that the historical and national roots of strategic policies were being unduly neglected.

Thus for those seeking to understand Communist states, political culture looked like a promising approach. For advocates of the political culture approach, studying Communist states was also attractive, as these states offered the best testing ground available in the 'laboratory of history' for examining the links between the political system and popular attitudes. As Brian Barry had written, the 'naturally-occurring "crucial experiment" is, of course, a change in régime'.[30] In the case of the Soviet Union, the new revolutionary regime had fashioned a new system and set about consciously and vigorously trying to change the beliefs and values of its people, to create the new Soviet man. If old beliefs and values persisted even as a government with control of the media and education tried to inculcate new ones, then the importance of political culture would be demonstrated; but if the regime could rapidly, perhaps within a generation, change the basic beliefs of the population, then political culture would be shown to be 'a weak variable at best'.[31]

The work of White and others has provided support for the view that popular attitudes change slowly, resisting even concerted attempts by governments to alter them.[32] White found that, while there had been changes in the political culture inherited by the Bolsheviks, nevertheless much remained the same.[33] On the other hand, Richard Fagen's work on Cuba suggests that more change can be achieved by a determined regime, while a

[29] White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*, p. *ix*.
[30] Brian Barry, *Sociologists, Economists and Democracy* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1970), p. 52.
[31] Almond, *A Discipline Divided*, p. 158.
[32] *Ibid*, p. 168.
[33] White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*, p. 166.

recent article on the former Soviet Union takes issue with the often argued position that the traditional Russian political culture is antithetical to democracy.[34] Jeffrey Hahn argues that today's popular attitudes in Russia are in line with the new democratic system being erected.[35] Nevertheless, there does seem to be some measure of agreement among scholars of Communist states that political culture is an important variable, and political culture advocates believe that their approach has been vindicated by the work done on Communist states.

Political culture revived

The resurgence which the concept of political culture has enjoyed since the late 1980s is explained by Gabriel Almond as a consequence of the retreat of competing theories.[36] The first of these was Marxism, which tended to dismiss political culture as capitalist ideology, but which has been in disarray following the collapse of the Soviet empire. The second, and more significant, is rational choice theory. At the same time that political culture was emerging as a major political science concept, influenced by ideas from sociology and other disciplines, so too ideas from economics were spreading into political science. These ideas included the view that decision-makers should be seen as rational maximisers. This theory, it was claimed, yielded powerful explanations without the need for wasteful analysis of cultural contexts. Strategic culture developed as a reaction to such notions of universal rationality; political culture, it appears, was pushed into the margins of political science by these notions. Now, however, rational choice theorists are 'seeking to escape from the reductionist microrational quandary into which they had dug themselves', allowing political culture to stage a comeback.[37]

[34] Richard R. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba* (Stanford, CAL: Stanford University Press, 1969), pp. 150-60.
[35] Jeffrey W. Hahn, 'Continuity and Change in Russian Political Culture', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 21, Part 4 (October 1991), pp. 393-421.
[36] Almond, 'The Return to Political Culture', in Diamond, pp. *ix-xii*.
[37] *Ibid*, p. *xi*.

Other work from the late 1980s onwards on political culture suggests that the concept is more at home now with recent moves in social and political theory. Gibbins investigates whether the political cultures of modern industrial societies have undergone transformation in the post-modern age. The finding of his edited volume is that profound cultural change is underway and needs to be investigated - and already had been, by many outside mainstream political science. In particular, old values and belief systems are fragmenting. Gibbins suggests no one way forward methodologically with the study of political culture, recommending only eclecticism in methods, in keeping perhaps with the post-modern theme of fragmentation.[38] For Welch, progress in political culture may be possible through utilising methods drawn from other approaches, such as phenomenology, social constructivism and the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz.[39] Just as political culture was boosted initially by influences from other branches of social theory, so it seems now to be gaining some fresh impetus as it is opened up to new thinking from other fields.

Issues in Political Culture

Various problems arose in the course of the development of the political culture approach which undermined its viability, and which account for its fall from grace in the 1970s. Many of these mirror the problems encountered by strategic culture scholars and identified in the previous chapter. It is therefore of interest to see how these problems have been tackled in the political culture literature. This section will pick out and discuss the most important of these problems. The two most important noted in the previous chapter are first, the relationship between culture and other types of explanations, especially explanations based on structure or rational calculation of interest; and second, the methods by which culture may best be studied. It is with these problems that this section begins. What answers have political culture scholars come up with?

[38] Gibbins, pp. 12-24.
[39] Welch, pp. 104-17.

Culture and explanation

The split between positivistic and interpretivist approaches to the study of strategic culture also finds expression in the political culture literature. Indeed, this fissure in the political culture literature between humanist and scientific approaches offers a view of political science in microcosm.[40] As Lucian Pye has written,

> Some of our subfields - some of *us* - are convinced that true knowledge can be found only in the rigorous search for invariances, for the regularities we expect to find in nature. In this spirit we like to think of man and society having the lawlike qualities we associate with the physical universe. For other subfields - and others of us - knowledge is the search for meaning, for understanding and interpretation, that is, for what is human in the blending of mind and spirit.[41]

Some of those studying political culture have taken a positivistic, scientific and quantitative line, searching for causal explanation, while others, citing the anthropologist Clifford Geertz's view that 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun', have set out to understand these webs, which are composed of attitudes, beliefs and values which give meaning to political acts.[42]

Whether scholars position themselves on one or other side of this divide will determine their view of what work political culture does. Initially the search was for explanation. In *The Civic Culture,* the dependent variable was taken to be a stable political system, and political culture was seen as the independent variable responsible for the stability of the system. Political culture caused certain outcomes, it was supposed. However, critics pointed out that although a correlation was shown between the existence of certain values and attitudes on the one hand, and stability on the other, causation was

[40] See Welch, p. 2. Welch also argues that this is something of a false distinction, as all quantitative data has a qualitative dimension.
[41] Lucian W. Pye, 'Political Science and the Crisis of Authoritarianism', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (March 1990), p. 4.
[42] See Archie Brown, 'Conclusions', in Brown, p. 153.

not proven in the study.[43] Nor, even supposing a causal relationship did obtain between the two, was it clear in which direction it ran. Did these attitudes and values produce stability, or did stability produce these attitudes and values? This point will be taken up again below.

Whatever its weaknesses, Almond and Verba's conception of political culture held that it did a lot of explanatory work. At the other end of the determinist spectrum, there are those who see culture as doing very little explanatory work. For one analyst, it may be most useful as a teaching aid. In teaching, the argument runs, it is important to come up with coherent accounts of politics, which may involve discussion of areas where little research is done or 'where rigorous research conclusions may seem impracticable or in principle impossible'.[44] In this spirit, perhaps, text books on political systems will often include an introductory chapter on the political culture of the state in question, or something similar, but then proceed to explain events without much reference back to the political culture section.[45] As Robert Tucker puts it,

> Might not the central importance of a concept like that of political culture be that it assists us to take our bearings in the study of the political life of a society, to focus on what is happening or not happening, to describe and analyse and order many significant data, and to raise fruitful questions for thought and research - *without explaining anything*?[46]

Political culture could then be no more than an important background factor which enriches understanding rather than enhancing explanation. It can describe the assumptions of decision-makers without relating them to behaviour.[47]

Somewhere in between these extremes, political culture can be seen as a non-

[43] For example, see Barry, pp. 48-50.
[44] Miller, p. 42.
[45] See Welch, pp. 72-73.
[46] Robert C. Tucker, 'Culture, Political Culture, and Communist Society', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (June 1973), p. 179.
[47] See Elkins and Simeon, p. 129.

independent variable, an intervening factor of some explanatory power when linked to other variables.[48] The situation in which people find themselves, and calculations of interest, may determine behaviour more than the values they hold. It is not always possible to act in accordance with values. The importance of interests and structure is acknowledged, the question being where the culture fits in between them. Why then single out cultural factors? Partly because of the feeling that they have been neglected, partly for heuristic reasons, as focusing on one factor may enhance understanding of its importance.[49] Also it is believed that cultural factors are highly significant. Sensitivity to them adds 'depth and richness to our appreciation of political events'.[50] To adopt this approach will yield certain insights, it is hoped, which will complement those offered by other approaches.

If the political culture does not directly determine behaviour, what role does it play? Many writers argue that it operates by creating predispositions to action, or that it sets boundaries and defines the context in which people operate politically. It will influence how people express themselves. It will also influence what sorts of behaviour will be seen as acceptable, and, operating more instrumentally, it may provide justifications for action.[51] What the culture does not do is to determine how people will act. It may predispose people towards certain types of action, but it does not require a particular course of action. Other factors will determine which course is taken. Prediction is therefore unlikely to be possible on the basis of understanding the culture.

The political culture ought to have some part to play in all behaviour, though it will vary from case to case. This ought to be stressed because political culture has tended to become a residual variable, used for explaining behaviour which cannot be accounted for in any other way.[52] The role of political culture should be investigated in all decisions

[48] See for instance Kavanagh, *Political Culture,* p. 13.
[49] *Ibid*, p. 12.
[50] Walter Rosenbaum, *Political Culture* (London: Nelson, 1975), p. 5.
[51] Kavanagh, *British Politics*, p. 49.
[52] Lane, p. 364.

and behaviour, not just in behaviour which cannot satisfactorily be accounted for by other means. Moreover, if for example the bureaucratic politics model is being used, it should be borne in mind that bureaucracies are more than just sets of rules and procedures. They too operate within cultural contexts, so that the political culture may be an important factor in influencing how organisations work.

Structure and culture

In strategic culture writing, a major issue is whether the structure of the international system shapes state attitudes or whether national cultures do. A similar issue arises in political culture, where the question of whether political structures determine beliefs is crucial. If they do, then the value of political culture is much diminished, and the structures themselves become the more important area of study. What started people thinking in terms of political cultures was that it seemed that a democratic political structure could not be erected unless certain values were already in place in the population. But Almond and Verba are often accused of ignoring the extent to which structures can determine values.[53] They are accused of assuming that the attitudes of a population lead the system to operate in a particular manner, and paying insufficient attention to the possibility that the system leads to the creation of these attitudes. Did stable democracy in Britain and the USA result from the existence of the civic culture, or did the civic culture come into being because of the creation of a stable democratic system?

Almond and Verba's original civic culture study had surprisingly little to say about this, simply observing that certain values existed which were consistent with stable democracy. The implication of the work however was that unless these values were present stable democracy could not prosper. In later work, Almond argued that the political culture approach did not assume that causality ran only in one direction, from

[53] See for example Wiatr, p. 105; and Carole Pateman, 'The Civic Culture: A Philosophical Critique', in Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisited*, p. 80.

attitudes to systems. He accepted that causality worked both ways, that political and social structures have some part in creating values, but that structures were not the sole determinants of these values: 'the causal arrows between culture and structure and performance go both ways'.[54] Structuralists, however, for example Marxists, would argue that the political culture is determined by structures - in this case, class structures - and has no autonomous existence or influence. It is reduced to the status of an epiphenomenon, with no explanatory power of its own, becoming just one link in the chain of causation running from structure to behaviour. However, even if culture is seen only as 'the last link in the chain of causation before behaviour itself', it still has some value as an explanation. If I'm late because I missed my train, that is still an explanation even if there are other explanations of why I missed the train.[55]

The relationship between structures and cultures is a complex one. One of the initial claims of the political culturalists was that political culture could bridge the micro-macro gap which dogs political science. Micro-politics, the attitudes of individuals, proceeded on one plane, while macro-politics, the study of the structure of the whole political system, proceeded on another. It was hoped that political culture might be the link which would somehow facilitate the study of the relationship between the two levels. It was not clear how this could be achieved and indeed it would seem to have been abandoned.[56] Certainly many questions remain unanswered on the link between these two levels.

One question is whether, even accepting that structures can determine attitudes, they take some time to do so. Thus there may be a time lag between the adoption of new structures and the development of appropriate attitudes; or it may be that attitudes appropriate to old structures inhibit or even prevent the establishment of new ones. In the

[54] Almond, *A Discipline Divided*, p. 144.
[55] See Barry, pp. 96-97.
[56] See Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, pp. 32-33; and Verba, 'On Revisiting the Civic Culture', in *The Civic Culture Revisited*, p. 402.

cases of newly emerging states, the problem could be not that the new structures could not produce new values and attitudes, but that the values and attitudes produced by the old structures took on a life of their own and proved resistant to change. Even if attitudes and values resulted from structures originally, then, they may become independent causal factors in their own right. Then again, structures may enforce certain behaviour on people, though they believe it is wrong or against their interests.

Another question, begged by Almond and Verba, is how the civic culture attitudes came into being in the first place. There is a chicken and egg question here. If structures have created attitudes, how were these structures themselves created? Was human agency the force which initially erected the structures, and so did attitudes in part determine them? Is there any way to tell? And if cultures do enjoy autonomous status once created, and then influence structures, is there any way to separate the two, to establish in which direction causation flows? Is all that can be said that political cultures are both influenced by and influence structures, that causation runs both ways? For Kavanagh, 'the actual relationship between structures and values is likely to be one of mutual reinforcement over time, and the fact that they interact in this way makes it well nigh impossible to separate the values from the performance of the political structure'.[57]

Interests and political culture

The impetus for the growth of strategic culture studies lay in a reaction against the assumption of a 'rational strategic man' in strategic studies. Likewise in political culture rational choice theory offers a competing view of human motivation. If, as rational choice theory suggests, the political values and attitudes held by people are determined solely or mostly by rational calculations of interest, then the political culture approach has little or no contribution to make. Political behaviour can be explained and predicted without reference to national specificity. Scholars of political culture obviously challenge this view.

[57] Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, p. 66.

Almond argues that political behaviour is not 'reducible to rational choice individualism', that rational choice theory simplifies to too great a degree what goes on in the minds of citizens.[58] Of course calculations of material interest will be made, but patriotism, instincts, habits, pride, group loyalty and other factors would be omitted from rational choice theories, although they are important motivating factors.[59] Because they do not examine what are often implicit beliefs, because emotions can be so strong, people will often behave in ways which are out of line with the courses of action suggested by short-term material interest calculations.

Rationality and culture need not be set in opposition to each other, however. There is room in rational choice theory to accommodate culture, and vice versa. Some rational choice theorists use the assumption of rationality as a heuristic device to generate hypotheses, then allow complications such as culture into the equation. Others use rational choice theory in conjunction with other models.[60] The complaint of political culture scholars is against the neglect of culture, just as strategic culture advocates reacted to the assumption of a universal strategic rationality and the neglect of culture in strategic studies. Political culture analysts stress that there is no universal rationality, and that rationality is itself a cultural concept.[61] What appears rational to one culture will not to another; how people define their interests will vary from culture to culture. So the political culture objection to rational choice theory is not necessarily to the notion that people try rationally to calculate their interests, but to the idea that people everywhere will make the same sort of calculations.

Methodology

The second main question facing strategic culture is how it should be studied. Above, it

[58] Almond, *A Discipline Divided*, p. 143.
[59] Almond, 'The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept', in Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisited*, pp. 29-30.
[60] See Almond, *A Discipline Divided*, pp. 124-29.
[61] See Lane, pp. 365-74.

was observed that the split between positivists and interpretivists affects how political culture's role in explanation is conceived. This split also affects how political culture is studied. Indeed, methodological issues have also dogged the study of political culture. The initial impetus given to the study of political culture came from the belief that it could be pursued 'according to accepted canons of scientific research'.[62] A positivistic approach was desired, in other words, and new survey methods seemed to permit this to be achieved. Surveys would, in a systematic and reliable fashion, produce a great deal of quantifiable, hard data on popular values. However, problems have emerged in the use of survey data which complicate this picture. One problem is that many relevant beliefs may exist at a less than conscious level in the minds of citizens. What are known as 'primitive beliefs', unstated beliefs which are taken for granted and assumed to be held by everyone else, may not be easy to get at in surveys.[63] Certainly the questionnaires would have to be cleverly constructed to elicit them, and interviewers skilled and perceptive.

Another difficulty is whether the culture can simply be considered as the aggregate of political attitudes, or whether it is more than, or just different from, the sum of its parts. Lurking here is the individualistic fallacy, where the characteristics of a group are inferred wrongly from the aggregated features of the individuals who make up the group.[64] Culture is a property belonging to a group, whereas attitudes and beliefs belong only to individuals. The attributes of individual members of the group need not be shared by the group as a whole, and nor need the attributes of the group be found in the individuals - to assume this may be to commit the ecological fallacy, the reverse of the individualistic fallacy, that individuals will share the characteristics of the culture to which they belong.[65] The culture should therefore be seen as possessing the property of supramembership: that is, it must be more than just the sum of individual attitudes. Thus the work of Almond and Verba is criticised for not being about political culture at all, as it 'identifies political

[62] Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, p. 9.
[63] Sidney Verba, 'Conclusion', in Pye and Verba, p. 518.
[64] Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, p. 63.
[65] *Ibid*.

culture with the aggregate characteristics of individuals'.[66] This line of argument suggests that the political culture has a life of its own, is almost an autonomous actor, a controversial point.[67]

If it is accepted that the political culture is more than just the sum of individual attitudes, then the value of survey methods is questioned. It could be argued, nevertheless, that surveys still provide many clues about the nature of the culture. But survey methods cannot in any case always be utilised. In Communist states, for example, or where historical periods are under examination, other sources need to be found. When dealing with historical studies, Communist states and elites, content analysis of speeches and documents may be the best course. Problems can arise, however, where data derived from content analysis for a historical period are compared with data from surveys for the contemporary period. This may not be comparing like with like.[68] Where possible comparable sources should be used.

One methodological point on which there is widespread agreement is that a comparative approach is required. If the argument is that different states will have distinctive political cultures which will cause their political systems to operate in different manners, then this can only really be shown in a comparative framework. It would be possible to describe the political culture of a single nation by looking at it alone, but not to say which parts of it were unique to that state and therefore particularly significant. Single country studies are often therefore stepping stones on the way to wider comparative projects.[69] Moreover, where issues of causation are being investigated, comparing two or more states brings you closer to a controlled experiment. If two states have similar constitutions and political institutions, for example, yet their political actors behave in

[66] Stephen Chilton, 'Defining Political Culture', *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (September 1988), pp. 424-25.
[67] See Archie Brown, 'Conclusions', in Brown, p. 152.
[68] See Mary McAuley, 'Political Culture and Communist Politics: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back', in Brown, p. 19.
[69] Rosenbaum, p. 21.

markedly different ways, this would suggest that cultural differences could be playing an important part in influencing behaviour.

The difficulty which can occur here is that of equivalence, however. It is necessary to compare like with like, but in the messy 'real world' there will not be two states where most conditions are identical, allowing them to be controlled out. Welch also argues that the more detailed your study of any particular nation-state, the more awkward comparison becomes with any other.[70] In addition, conducting cross-national surveys also raises problems of equivalence. The questions asked need to be faithfully translated, while interview situations must be similar. Surveys should be conducted in the different states at the same time, but it could be that events in one state of only short-term significance will influence the answers there at the time of the survey. A further problem is that people might have different attitudes to interviews and surveys in different states.[71] Content analysis could also face equivalence issues. As well as the obvious language difficulty, there may exist different styles of writing official documents or making speeches. Similar problems can also be expected where comparison is being made within one state but across different time periods. This is an important approach to show whether attitudes endure or change rapidly, but the meaning of language can change over time, as could the style of recording official meetings.[72] These may not be insurmountable obstacles, and they are shared with other comparative politics approaches. However, they inject a degree of awkwardness into the analysis and must be taken on board.

Another source often used to identify political attitudes is actual political behaviour. In the Communist states, where open sources are hard to come by, behaviour is often drawn upon. Many analysts have however pointed to a serious potential problem with this approach. The danger is to engage in circular reasoning, to infer from behaviour certain values and then to use those values to explain the same behaviour. To argue that

[70] Welch, chapter one and p. 75.
[71] Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, pp. 55-60.
[72] See McAuley, p. 37.

the stability of the British political system results from a popular consensus on certain key values, and then to produce as evidence of this consensus the stability of the system, is to argue tautologically.[73] If behaviour is the only source being used, moreover, to explain other behaviour, why bring political culture into the explanation at all? Why not simply point to regularities in behaviour and use these to predict further regularities, without bothering to infer beliefs supposedly motivating them?[74] One way round these difficulties is first to use sources other than behaviour, where possible, and then to be careful to infer beliefs from various different types of behaviour and not use the inferred beliefs to explain similar types.[75]

A final methodological issue concerns the danger of selectivity. The temptation is to seek out previous behaviour, speeches, or whatever, which suggest the existence of beliefs which still persist in the contemporary period, and to ignore behaviour or speeches indicative of contrary beliefs. This is a criticism made by Mary McAuley of Stephen White's work.[76] This is not a problem unique to political culture research, of course, but may be no less serious for that. Some discipline is needed to ensure that all political attitudes, and not just those which seem to explain current behaviour best, are described.

In conclusion, although commentators often note that many propositions about different states possessing distinctive political cultures are intuitively plausible, there are many problems to be encountered in proving the existence and establishing the importance of political cultures.[77] For many political scientists, these difficulties have helped to discredit political culture. Pye's description of the division that runs through political scientists between behaviouralists and those favouring interpretive approaches is relevant here. Political culture, allied to survey techniques, initially appealed to behaviouralists

[73] See Arend Lijphart, 'The Structure of Inference', in *The Civic Culture Revisited*, p. 47.
[74] See Barry, p. 91.
[75] Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, p. 49.
[76] See McAuley, pp. 16-17.
[77] For example, Ronald Inglehart, 'The Renaissance of Political Culture', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (December 1988), p. 1205.

because it appeared to be susceptible to quantification and measurement. These hopes have receded, though many recent articles on political culture begin by looking for a new, improved theoretical formulation which will overcome the methodological problems it has met and bring it within the fold of behavioural political science.

But if behaviouralists have despaired of political culture, interpretivists may still find it a useful approach. Indeed, it is possible that your response to the proposition that 'what is important to study cannot be measured and what can be measured is not important to study' will determine how you regard political culture.[78] For interpretivists, it is possible to abandon the search for a rigorous, testable theory of political culture and accept that in the grey areas of human motives and activity scientific precision is unattainable. Political culture can then be used for 'heuristic argument rather than systematic and causal reasoning'.[79] This is not to say that proof should not be sought as far as possible, but that political culture need not be disregarded where insufficient evidence is available.

Referent groups: cultures, sub-cultures, nations and states

One of the questions facing strategic culture is: whose culture should be studied? Throughout the foregoing analysis of the political culture literature it has been assumed for the most part that nation-states have distinctive cultures. A number of points should now be made about the relationship between states, nations and cultures. The first is that the state may not be the best unit of analysis for cultural factors. States may be composed of various nations with distinct cultures, for example. Is there enough common ground among them to warrant discussion of the culture of the state, or does it need to be broken down into national cultures? Another point is that there may be various sub-cultures within a state, based not on nationality but on socio-economic status or religion. Questions have to be asked about whether there is a unified political

[78] Brown, 'Conclusions', in Brown, p. 156.
[79] He Baogang, 'A Methodological Critique of Lucian Pye's Approach to Political Culture', *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (March 1992), pp. 102-3.

culture within a state, or a dominant one but various sub-cultures, or a fragmented one with none able to dominate.[80]

Sub-cultures may also result from the roles held by people.[81] Soldiers, bureaucrats and politicians, for example, may develop different outlooks on life. Of particular importance is the distinction between elites and the mass of the population, between those with the power and responsibility of decision-making and those without it. Attention needs to be focused on the differences and similarities between the two, on whether separate socialisation processes exist, as well as on how unified each is. It may be that different methods are appropriate to the study of each, with surveys for the mass and content analysis for the elites. This throws up another set of issues, about how to identify elites, which could require study of the literature on elites.

As well as looking at culture at levels below the nation-state, there is also the question of whether the appropriate unit for analysis transcends the nation-state.[82] A final issue in this section is therefore that there will be pressure from the modernising world culture on national cultures, especially in the age of the small world brought about by technological advances. What effects will cultural imperialism have on smaller countries? Is there for instance a Western devised diplomatic culture which influences diplomats in all countries more than their own domestic political culture? It seems likely that there will be tension between domestic and emerging world cultures, the outcome of which needs to be studied.

Definitions

Another issue in the strategic culture literature concerned the meanings of the various terms employed. Definitions have also been problematical for political culture. As was noted in the introduction, defining culture with any precision, in any context, is

[80] See Brown, 'Conclusions', in Brown, p. 176.
[81] Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, p. 29.
[82] See Verba, 'On Revisiting the Civic Culture', in *The Civic Culture Revisited*, p. 406.

troublesome. In broad terms it can be said that political culture concerns the attitudes, values, beliefs and feelings of its people towards their political system. These attitudes, values and so on may well be unique to a particular group due to its distinctive historical experience. They form the environment, context, or matrix within which political activity occurs. The political culture gives meaning to political activity and exerts some influence over political behaviour. This shows the broad area which political culture covers.

This sort of broad description of political culture is suitable as a 'label for an area of scholarly emphasis or focus'.[83] But does it indicate a discrete and identifiable entity? A major problem faced by scholars of political culture is that, in the multitude of definitions which exist, political culture has come to include 'virtually everything'.[84] Debate surrounds what to include and what to exclude from political culture. One question is to go beyond the vague formulation 'attitudes regarding the political system' or to politics to specify which attitudes about which aspects of the political system are worthy of investigation: incumbents, policies, institutions, decisions, and so on. Which attitudes shape behaviour? Which are most relevant to understanding the operation of the political system?[85] Thus can the concept can be narrowed down.

In his work on operational codes, discussed below, Alexander George proposes ten questions, the answers to which should constitute the most important political beliefs. The questions are intended to elicit responses on two types of beliefs: instrumental and philosophical beliefs. Philosophical beliefs concern the nature of political life, the place of conflict, the nature of opponents, the predictability of the future, the control one has over events, and the role of chance in politics. Instrumental beliefs concern how goals should be selected and pursued effectively, how risks can be assessed and minimised, how action can best be timed, and which

[83] Miller, p. 41.
[84] Lane, p. 362.
[85] Lucian W. Pye, 'Culture and Political Science: Problems in the Evaluation of the Concept of Political Culture', in Louis Schneider and Charles M. Bonjean, (eds), *The Idea of Culture in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 72.

means of achieving goals would be most effective.[86] George's ten questions were later refined by Sjöblom. He called for more specific questions on the actor's views of conflict - was it believed to be permanent, could it be ameliorated or eradicated? What are believed to be the sources of conflict? What are the costs of conflict believed to be? Is it worth these costs? How are economic, political, military, technological strength ranked in importance? How are the capabilities of other actors perceived? In addition to asking how opponents are perceived, Sjöblom asks how the self is perceived.[87]

Further narrowing and categorising is possible by distinguishing between attitudes, which tend to refer to transient views on specific situations, beliefs, which may be more deeply rooted empirical views, and values, which indicate normative and fundamental propositions on specific issues.[88] Political culture analysts are more interested in beliefs, though attitudes on current policy may be useful indicators of more profound beliefs. This distinction can also be expressed by differentiating fundamental or basic beliefs from secondary beliefs of less importance, as is done in some writing on belief systems.[89] Also distinctions can be made, as noted above, between cognitive, affective and evaluative beliefs: respectively knowledge of, emotional disposition towards, and judgements about, politics.[90] Finally, as shown below, primitive or unstated beliefs are identified. These are beliefs held at a less than conscious level.

Some writers have also included notions of political styles or operational codes under political culture. These refer to ways of thinking and acting in the political arena.[91] Others pay less or no attention to styles. The early work on operational codes upon which

[86] Alexander L. George, 'The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1969), pp. 201-26.
[87] Gunnar Sjöblom, 'Some Problems of the Operational Code Approach', in Christer Jönsson, (ed), *Cognitive Dynamics and International Politics* (London: Pinter, 1982), pp. 60-64.
[88] See Samuel Beer and Adam B. Ulam, (eds), *Patterns of Government: The Major Political Systems of Europe* (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 20; and Brown, 'Conclusions', in Brown, p. 161.
[89] See James Goddard, *Policy as the Implementation of Belief Systems: Crime and Human Nature, 1964-1970* (PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 1993), pp. 65-66.
[90] See Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, p. 11.
[91] See Pye, 'Introduction', in Pye and Verba, p. 7; and White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*, p. 1.

other scholars have built was carried out by Nathan Leites.[92] His studies in the early 1950s of the operational code of the leaders of the Soviet Union was subsequently taken up and given an explicit framework by Alexander George, and a number of case studies have since been based on his framework. George was uneasy with the term 'operational code', which suggested 'a set of recipes or repertoires for political action that an elite applies mechanically in its decision-making'. This was not what he had in mind. Rather, his interest was in the beliefs of elites regarding 'fundamental issues of history' and 'central questions of politics'. These beliefs would operate as 'a prism that influences the actor's perceptions and diagnoses of the flow of political events, his definitions and estimates of particular situations'. They would influence, though not determine, the behaviour of the elite, by setting guidelines and standards and producing behavioural norms.[93]

Further areas of debate concern the importance of language and symbols and the relationship between the political culture and the broader culture of a state. Language is not often mentioned, yet in looking at how people construct their images of reality, it can be argued that language is an essential consideration.[94] Indeed, given the problems encountered by political culture analysts in using words such as democracy and development, which were later argued to be highly value-laden, more attention ought to have been paid to language. As the means which people have of expressing themselves and comprehending their worlds, language may shed much light on political attitudes. Symbols have received more attention in the literature, with one writer even promoting them as the essence of a political culture.[95] Flags, monuments, events, even people, may all enjoy symbolic importance, conveying high levels of meaning to one population but not another.[96] So both language and symbols, it can be argued, are of prime importance. But

[92] Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo* (Westport, CONN: Greenwood Press, 1972. Original edition New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951).
[93] George, p. 191.
[94] See Murray Edelman, 'Skeptical Studies of Language, the Media and Mass Culture', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (December 1988), pp. 1333-39.
[95] Dittmer, p. 566.
[96] See Beer and Ulam, pp. 22-23.

should they be seen as part of the political culture, or independent factors in their own right? Or are they better viewed as means to achieve an understanding of the political culture?

One other important area of debate has been whether to include behaviour in political culture. Stephen White's definition of political culture is 'the attitudinal and behavioural matrix within which the political system is located', yet others deliberately exclude behaviour from their definitions, restricting it to attitudes and values.[97] What is clear is that an important question in political culture is: how do attitudes influence behaviour? Those who would separate the two argue that to do so maintains an important analytical distinction. Certainly this distinction must be borne in mind, and serious problems exist, which will be discussed shortly, in inferring attitudes from behaviour and vice versa. On the other hand, some have argued that patterns of behaviour, or customs and habits, as opposed to discrete acts, ought to be included in political culture.[98] Perhaps it does not matter greatly whether behaviour is included in any definition of political culture, as Almond himself believes, so long as the distinction between behaviour and attitudes is kept clear and the relationship between them is investigated.[99]

Another question over the boundaries of political culture asks how it is related to the broader culture of a state. It is generally believed that the political culture is a small part, or sub-set, of the broader culture.[100] Many general attitudes on life will be relevant to political attitudes. If there exists a tendency towards fatalism in the population at large, for instance, then this is likely to affect the expectations held by the population about the performance of the political system.[101] On the other hand, it is possible that political attitudes may stand in contradiction to more general views. The line between political and these other attitudes may therefore not be easy to draw.

[97] White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*, p. 1.
[98] See Archie Brown, 'Soviet Political Culture through Soviet Eyes', in Brown, p. 107.
[99] See Archie Brown, 'Introduction', in Brown, pp. 3-4.
[100] See for instance Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, p. 12.
[101] Elkins and Simeon, p. 132.

Overall, therefore, deciding what actually constitutes a political culture is problematic. Is it to be seen as a catch-all term doing no more than indicating a general area of study? If so, should various sub-terms be used to preserve its analytical precision?[102] Or should a narrower definition be sought, with matters such as language, which might warrant study in their own right, being excluded? Breaking down the global concept of culture could make it 'a more parsimonious tool for explanation', Kavanagh believes.[103] The difficulty of finding agreement on the content of political culture contributed to its decline as a field of study.

Origins of political cultures

A key issue in strategic culture is what are the sources of strategic beliefs? This issue too has been raised in the political culture literature. A criticism of the original *Civic Culture* study was that it failed to investigate the historical roots of the civic culture.[104] Other commentators do however stress the need for a historical dimension in political culture studies, because 'eventually we have to go back and explain how the political culture came to be formed and expressed the way that it is'.[105] In this context Inglehart writes, with regard to Weber's linking of the Protestant work ethic and capitalism, that there is no immutable relationship between Protestantism and economic achievement. Rather Weber was observing a specific historical experience which gave rise to the relationship.[106] But which experiences should be investigated, and in what time frame - recent experiences, or those more distant in time? McAuley recommends looking at present beliefs and asking which can be understood only with reference to past experience.[107] Those working on Communist states have been particularly keen to show that historical experiences rather

[102] See Miller, p. 46.
[103] *Ibid*, p. 55.
[104] See Wiatr, p. 105.
[105] Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, p. 27.
[106] Inglehart, 'The Renaissance of Political Culture', p. 1221.
[107] See McAuley, p. 22.

than current structures shape beliefs.

It is also important to examine what people know about and how they interpret the histories of their nations. Beliefs about the past may be politically important ones. Which historical events are seen as politically significant? Which shape orientations? Perhaps those affecting 'the great masses of people directly, profoundly, and tangibly', such as depressions, or rampant inflation, or war, will have most impact.[108] What part does the Tsarist period play in Russian political culture? Even in people who did not live through this period, how is it regarded? Which are the most important events living on in people's minds, and how do these affect their contemporary thinking and attitudes? Or, how do contemporary thinking and attitudes affect how the past is read? Can governments manipulate the historical record to support particular policies? It is possible that events may become myths also, so that objective history can be less important than how it is perceived? There are therefore many crucial questions involving the role of a state's history in the formation of its political culture.

Concern with the ways in which elites view and use the past is the subject of other commentators such as Ernest May and Richard Neustadt, and also Yuen Foong Khong. Though not working centrally within political culture, they have examined related concerns. They ask how decision-makers are influenced by their knowledge - or lack of knowledge - of past events, and in particular how, in reasoning by analogy with past events, they may arrive at decisions inappropriate to the circumstances they face.[109] Neustadt and May often found that history was trawled for analogies, sometimes to make the present more familiar, sometimes to find support for a particular policy, sometimes as a substitute for new, difficult thinking. These analogies were not always accurate nor closely examined, though in the case of Cuba efforts were made to scrutinise them. The

[108] Rosenbaum, pp. 16-17.
[109] Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: The Free Press, 1986); and Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

uncritical use of analogies often contributed, however, to poor decision-making. What is interesting is which historical events serve as analogies. For example, President Harry Truman, during the early stages of the Korean War, was influenced by the events of the 1930s, though he gave little consideration to why these events in particular sprang to mind nor whether they were appropriate.[110] The selection of particular analogies for use in political debate could be an important aspect of a political culture.

Change and continuity

A recurrent theme in the political culture literature, as in that of strategic culture, focuses on change and continuity. As has been noted, the importance of political culture depends to some degree on its persistence. If attitudes and values change rapidly in response to current events, their explanatory power is diminished. Culture can then be seen as a conservative force, maintaining the status quo. The potential for change is often neglected.[111] It is a criticism of the early work of Almond and Verba that it underestimated the extent to which the values identified with stable democracy were transient. They noted that their study was but 'a snapshot in a rapidly changing world', but Verba later admitted that events seemed to have more impact on basic values than they had earlier believed.[112] Inglehart later tried to account for change, using his generational approach to suggest a plasticity in political culture. On the other hand, the work on political cultures and change in Communist states suggests that values tend to persist even when concerted attempts are made to alter them. There is contradictory evidence therefore on the endurance of values, and the question of change remains an open and important one. It is crucial to see the dynamic potential of political culture.

Among the questions to be asked about change and political culture are the

[110] Neustadt and May, pp. 4, 7, 35-36, 43, 75, and 89.
[111] See Harry Eckstein, 'A Cultural Theory of Political Change', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, No. 3 (September 1988), p. 789.
[112] Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, p. *vii*; and Verba, 'On Revisiting the Civic Culture', in Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisited*, pp. 399-400.

following: first, how are values passed on to new generations? Political culture writing stresses the importance of socialisation here, the process by which people are inducted into the culture. Some accounts focus on what is learned by children in their contact with schools and family; others lay more emphasis on the contact and experience people have with the system itself in adult life. For those in governmental elites, there may be a further socialisation process. Learning may be both explicit and implicit, and some regimes may make strenuous efforts to inculcate certain values in young people. Indeed, socialisation into the political culture may be desirable for elites and governments to maintain the legitimacy of the system and their position within it.[113]

Various issues need to be tackled with regard to socialisation. How important relatively are the childhood and adult phases? In some psycho-cultural work the tendency is to stress childhood experience, even in such matters as toilet-training. For most political scientists the stress is however more on the values passed on by schools and families. It is important to identify the key socialising institutions, and to see which values they convey. It is also important to examine how adult experience with the system affects values, and how successful efforts deliberately to inculcate values are. Generational change also has to be considered. The ways in which new generations may reject aspects of the culture of older generations poses problems for the socialisation process. Finally a pitfall which needs to be avoided is to look at the political system and make inferences from it about the nature of socialisation, and then use socialisation to explain the system.

It is important actually to demonstrate that values are transmitted from generation to generation, not just to assert this. As Barrington Moore has written, inertia should not just be assumed, because culture and social continuity

> both have to be recreated anew in each generation, often with great pain and suffering. To maintain and transmit a value system, human beings are punched,

[113] Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, pp. 59-60.

> bullied, sent to jail, thrown into concentration camps, cajoled, bribed, made into heroes, encouraged to read newspapers, stood up against a wall and shot, and sometimes even taught sociology.[114]

Even if the socialisation process is rarely so harsh, it still has to be shown. This is not easy, and indeed one analyst questions whether it is possible to establish empirically all the linkages across time.[115] On the other hand, account needs to be taken of the danger of identifying certain values in a state at different time periods and assuming that they have been passed on and have been in continuous existence.[116] Yet it may be that different generations have simply made the same calculations based on their interests, and come to the same conclusions; or been forced by the political structure into holding certain attitudes.

If socialisation processes maintain beliefs, what does the political culture literature have to say about forces for change? As noted, change is likely to occur gradually as generations change and new events occur. Exposure to other cultures, through increased speed of travel and effectiveness of communication, is one possible force for slow change. More dramatic change may be brought about through certain traumatic experiences. War, and in particular comprehensive defeat in war, may lead to rethinking of old beliefs. So too might enemy occupation, or political revolution.[117] Overall, account must be taken of change. Gradual change is likely to be constantly underway, and dramatic change is also possible in certain circumstances.

Conclusion: political culture and strategic culture

Quite apart from the methodological and conceptual guidance which strategic culture analysts can draw from the intellectually linked concept of political culture, the latter's rise,

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[114] Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 86.
[115] Stephen White, 'Soviet Political Culture Reassessed', in Brown, p. 91.
[116] See McAuley, p. 24.
[117] Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, pp. 37-46.

fall and recent resurgence offer a cautionary tale. New ideas and methods entering political science in the 1950s and 1960s encouraged the development of a concept which offered means of resolving some pressing research problems of the moment. Political culture gripped the imaginations of many political scientists and came to be seen as an immensely powerful research tool, capable moreover of linking micro and macro analysis in a way that had not been done before. As difficulties started to emerge in the application of the concept, and then to multiply, mighty disillusion set in. The moral is that it would be dangerous to claim too much for strategic culture, so that expectations will not be disappointed. The Introduction to the thesis cited Sidney Verba's warning about 'an unfortunate tendency in the social sciences to oversell new concepts and to assume that the mere labeling of an old phenomenon with a new term represents a breakthrough in our understanding'.[118] A balanced appreciation which makes clear at the outset the strengths and weaknesses of the concept should avoid the swings of fortune endured by political culture.

One encouraging aspect which emerges from this study of political culture, however, is that the concept refuses to go away. In spite of the critiques it has faced and the popularity of other approaches which have pushed it to the margins, it continues to command the interest of academics, journalists and politicians. This indicates that it provides a means of referring to forces thought important, even though no agreed means of studying the concept can be found. Whether it has therefore 'reached the stage of conceptual maturity, where debates over definition are no longer prominent, and it is routinely invoked as if there were no question as to its meaning or usefulness', is a moot point. It could equally be 'the ultimate indignity, demonstrating only the concept's extreme vagueness and malleability'.[119] As Elkins and Simeon observe, 'political culture is one of the most popular and seductive concepts in political science; it is also one of the most controversial and confused'.[120] Political culture has always been with us, since the

[118] Sidney Verba, 'Conclusion', in Pye and Verba, p. 515.
[119] Welch, p. 159.
[120] Elkins and Simeon, p. 127.

beginning of thinking about politics, if we accept that the concept was implicit in the work of Plato and Aristotle on the importance of values and socialisation. The Greeks did not have a word for it: the term itself did not emerge until centuries later. However, if the term 'political culture' had not been coined by Herder, someone else would have needed to coin it.

Journalists and politicians can, of course, employ such terms about without concerning themselves with the methodological and epistemological questions they raise. For academic analysts, these questions cannot be ignored. More specifically, then, what does this examination of the political culture literature suggest for the study of strategic culture? On the pessimistic side it must be acknowledged that serious problems have been encountered in studying political culture, problems which have led to its decline in importance as an explanatory approach among political scientists. Some of these problems are not relevant to the study of strategic culture. For instance, the linkage of political culture to understandings of development and democracy particular to the West, which discredited political culture, need not apply to strategic culture. Indeed, the point of studying culture is surely to increase sensitivity to other ways of seeing the world and other ways of doing things than our own. That political culture fell prey to insensitivity to other possibilities is indeed a major flaw that should be avoided in the study of strategic culture. Given the involvement of Western states in brutal wars, it would be insupportably arrogant for those in the West to seek to impose their own strategic cultures on others.

On the other hand, some of the methodological issues uncovered in the political culture literature pose problems also in the study of strategic culture. It is interesting that, *mutatis mutandis*, the problems which have arisen in strategic culture have also dogged political culture. The danger of circular reasoning certainly needs to be guarded against, as do the problems of equivalence in comparative studies, and selectivity in historical analysis. However, these problems are not insurmountable, while other methodological issues which beset political culture research need not apply to strategic culture. The study

of strategic culture could involve asking about the orientations of the population as a whole towards the use of force, but would probably concentrate upon the decision-making elite. Thus the various problems of survey research need not come into play, as content analysis might be the preferred approach (though of course it would entail problems of its own). On the whole, the difficulties with which political culture research has been fraught are not so severe as immediately to spell defeat for the strategic culture approach.

A key problem in political culture research has been to find a way to study political culture according to established social science methods. It is instructive to consider this point especially, since Alastair Johnston, in the most sophisticated treatment of strategic culture, also attempts to develop a positivistic methodology.[121] Yet political culture scholars have encountered formidable methodological difficulties in demonstrating the explanatory role of political culture. However, the quantitative, positivistic behavioural approach which led to the widespread study of political culture was only a short phase in thinking about politics. More recent political culture work has been less positivistic in outlook. The lesson might be that strategic culture should be seen as a potentially valuable approach, but that more relaxed standards of proof should be accepted, and a less rigorous and scientific methodology adopted. Where possible empirical evidence should be sought, and impressionistic national character analyses avoided. However, the absence of hard supporting data need not necessitate abandoning strategic culture. In short, a more interpretive approach may be the most fruitful - a return in some respects to the way political culture was studied before the behavioural revolution. For sure, interpretivism entails risks, with the possibility that it tells more about the interpreter than the object of interpretation. But if political culture is regarded as important, and cannot be studied under strict positivistic standards, should we discard political culture or positivism? For some, it may be where hard evidence cannot be found, social scientists should not tread. For others, it may be possible through an interpretive approach to crystallise 'the essence

[121] Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). See the previous chapter of the thesis for details.

of a culture of a society in a way that piecemeal, hypothesis-testing, analytical methods never can'.[122]

Chapter Four now revisits the strategic culture literature and builds the points discussed above into a critique of the strategic culture literature. It then offers a way forward with the study of strategic culture, including a definition, a methodology and a framework for analysis.

[122] Miller, p. 44.

Chapter Four: Strategic Culture Revisited

The introduction to, and the first two chapters of, this thesis took stock of the development of the concept of strategic culture and made the case for pursuing its study further. Chapter One outlined broadly the origins and concerns of the concept and went on to locate it within the academic literature of strategic studies, as well as more general discussions of the use of force. It was argued that there is a 'common sense' appeal to the concept of strategic culture, which underlies its use by some journalists and scholars, even if they were or are unaware of the term. Some of this unwitting work on strategic culture has treated it cursorily. That which has taken more serious account of strategic cultural factors has not always done so in a systematic and explicit fashion, and has sometimes overemphasised their importance. Overall, while work along strategic cultural lines can be found in the strategic studies literature, there is little guidance regarding how culture can be incorporated into strategic analysis. More work was required.

The small but growing literature explicitly centred on the subject of strategic culture has begun to address directly the neglect of national specifity in strategic studies. Chapter Two surveyed this literature, with the aim of gathering together all that has been written on it, showing the different approaches taken and pointing to some of its strengths and weaknesses. One aspect highlighted was the non-cumulative nature of the literature. Many of those who have written about the subject have done so without reading and building upon the work of others, either those explicitly using the term 'strategic culture' or those who, using different terms, pursue similar lines of enquiry. Surveying the whole literature and describing its principal features, the points of convergence and departure, was therefore important.

While more recent writing on the subject displays greater sophistication than earlier work, attention was drawn to another feature of the literature, particularly in the early stages of its development: its lack of conceptual development of strategic culture. It was argued that writers on strategic culture, as well as failing to read all that had been written on the subject itself and related areas within strategic studies, had ignored other related areas of study. One obvious area identified was political culture. Chapter Three therefore cast the net wider, seeking to address the lack of theoretical coherence within strategic culture studies by examining the literature of political culture. The point was to see how that subject was related to strategic culture and then to draw lessons from it for the study of strategic culture. How could it assist the development of the concept of strategic culture? What pitfalls did it suggest needed to be avoided?

This chapter aims to highlight those aspects of the political culture perspective which can illuminate strategic culture. It is interesting to note initially that there are similarities in the origins of the strategic culture and political culture perspectives. Strategic culture advocates assert that the different geographical setting and historical experiences of states lead to the formation of distinct attitudes towards the use and threat to use force, which in turn influence strategic behaviour. The study of strategic culture began in part as a challenge to analyses which held that a state's strategic behaviour could be explained on the basis of rational calculations of means and ends; and in part as a challenge to realist and neo-realist writing which had little room for differences in the outlooks of state decision-makers. Strategic culture seeks to bring history and geography back into consideration.

Political culture, defined as 'a shorthand expression to denote the emotional and attitudinal environment within which the political system operates', emerged as a subject of academic study in part out of the growing feeling that certain political attitudes and beliefs

were required to sustain democracy.[1] These were not present in the populations of all states, however. The history and development of political communities would affect the attitudes and beliefs of their citizens. The new political culture approach was a reaction against studies of political systems which went no further than examining the constitutions and political institutions of states. Political culture was taken up enthusiastically by a number of scholars of Communist states because in this area the concentration on institutions was especially marked. These scholars, like strategic culturalists, sought to reintroduce history and geography to analysis, to examine the national historical contexts in which Communist systems operated. They focused on the ways in which the beliefs of the peoples of Communist states, developed over centuries, affected the working of the systems.

Both perspectives therefore hold that actors in the same situation might behave differently. They need not perceive the situation in the same way, and the different values and beliefs which they possess may lead them to favour different courses of action. Each perspective is critical of the views that behaviour can be explained merely through the study of institutions or through rational calculations of interest. The political culture approach developed as part of the behavioural revolution. It was hoped during that revolution in the 1950s and 1960s that beliefs and values might be measured and quantified. The point to note here is that scholars of political culture and strategic culture have reached a similar conclusion: that to attempt to understand and explain the operation of political systems and political decision-makers principally on the basis of structural imperatives or assumptions of universal rationality is to omit an important dimension. Human beings, as bearers of perceptions, beliefs and attitudes, will think and act in ways significantly out of kilter with the expectations of neo-realists, constitutional experts and rational choice theorists.

It is interesting to note also that similar problems have arisen in the study of

[1] This definition is from Dennis Kavanagh, *Political Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 10.

political culture to those which have emerged in writing on strategic culture and which were identified in Chapter Two. A methodological problem shared may not be a problem halved, but it is useful to know that the problems facing strategic culture are not unique. They apply to political culture also. Even though solutions acceptable to all have not been found to the problems facing political culture, that concept continues to be employed by political scientists.

This chapter now goes on to apply the insights gained from the survey of political culture and revisits the strategic culture literature in the light of them. This will be done under three headings, relating to the three propositions which comprise the strategic culture approach. First, that groups share distinctive sets of beliefs, values and attitudes regarding the threat and use of force. Second, that these sets of beliefs are shaped by the geographical setting, the historical experience and the political organisation of the group. Third, that comprehension of these beliefs aids understanding of the behaviour of the group. The chapter then goes on to offer a definition of strategic culture and to propose a methodology and a framework for the study of strategic culture.

Identifying strategic cultures

The first proposition of the strategic culture perspective is that distinct strategic cultures can be identified. In Chapter Two, various issues involved in identifying strategic cultures were highlighted, and in Chapter Three the political culture literature was explored to see whether similar issues had arisen there. The first of these issues focused on which referent group was appropriate. The second concerned definitions of the terms involved in analysing culture. The third issue centred on the sources from which beliefs might be inferred. These will now be re-considered.

Referent groups

Which should be the referent group for students of strategic culture? Most strategic culture analyses focus on the defence decision-making elite of a state, or its 'national strategic community'.[2] Some, such as Yitzhak Klein, look narrowly at the armed forces or the 'military establishment' of a state.[3] Most look more broadly to the political and military leadership who together shape defence policy. There is little discussion of mass beliefs or opinion. George Tanham and Desmond Ball speak in very general terms of cultural beliefs shared respectively by Indians and South East Asians rather than simply state decision-making groups.[4] Bradley Klein refers to peace movements as bearers of strategic beliefs quite different from their governments.[5] Overall, however, it is state decision-makers who form the principal focus of attention of strategic culture writers.

The point to make here is that various different, and overlapping, cultures can be identified. In certain respects elites in different states will share experiences and socialisation. They are all involved in the exercise of power, for instance, which may well breed distinct attitudes. Officers of foreign armies are educated at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, which presumably serves to spread British military values. NATO's Partnership for Peace scheme similarly brings members of the armed forces of states of the former Warsaw Pact into contact with NATO officers. States in alliance will share experiences and learn from each other. Many states will share cultural values, as may be the case in South East Asia or the West.

Some studies under the heading of political culture deal with elite groups. Many concentrate on mass opinion, however. They do note that within states also there may be

[2] Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica: RAND R-2154-AF, 1977), p. 8.
[3] Ira J. Klein, *Soviet Strategic Culture, 1917-1965* (PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 1988), p. 37. (Yitzhak and Ira Klein are the same person).
[4] George Tanham, 'Indian Strategic Culture', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter 1992), pp. 130-31.
[5] Bradley S. Klein, 'Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (April 1988), pp. 143-46.

different cultures. Elites experiences and socialisation will be different in some respects to the bulk of the population, but they will also share experiences with members of the wider culture of which they too are a part. Political culture students ask whether, within a state, there is a dominant culture, or whether the political culture is fragmented with no section dominant.[6] Strategic culture might also adopt this language, rather than tending just to assume cohesion.

Some strategic culture studies give little consideration to the existence of sub-cultures. Others recognise, as political culture analysts do, the existence of sub-cultures, or groups holding views different in some respects from the dominant culture. Snyder, for instance, underlines the importance of this issue, discussing whether sub-cultures can be identified which are grouped round one or other of the poles in the deterrence or war-fighting debate, both in the United States and the Soviet Union.[7] In this strategic culture has already borrowed from other subjects and in particular political culture. However, are these sub-cultures based around organisations, issues or cultural groups? This could be made clearer. The strategic culture approach will benefit from asking about the organisation of sub-cultures. The political culture literature suggests that sub-cultures may result from the roles held by people.[8] Soldiers, bureaucrats and politicians, for example, may be socialised into different outlooks on life. There are also possible religious and gender sub-divisions to take into account.

It is, therefore, too simple to assume that states or nations have distinctive and cohesive strategic cultures. There is room for difference between elite and mass and other groups within states: ethnic, national, or functional. There is room for commonality as well as difference between states. The argument is not then that people within states all share the same strategic beliefs or that there is no overlap between states. Various referent

[6] See Archie Brown, 'Conclusions', in Archie Brown, (ed), *Political Culture and Communist Studies* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), p. 176.
[7] Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture*, pp. 10-12.
[8] See Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 29.

groups are possible objects of study for those interested in strategic culture. However, given that force is usually exercised legitimately in the international system by states, it is reasonable to focus primarily on the level of strategic decision-makers within states and their beliefs and values, bearing in mind the possibility of different cultures or sub-cultures within the state and similarities with other state elites. These elites will surely have a unique mix of experience and socialisation.

Definitions

The main issue which emerges in defining political culture itself is whether to include behaviour in the definition. Stephen White is one writer who does, referring to political culture as the 'the attitudinal and behavioural matrix within which the political system is located'.[9] However, most writers take the view that since behaviour is what political culture is meant to explain, it is better not to include behaviour in the definition of political culture. On the other hand, some have argued that patterns of behaviour, or customs and habits, as opposed to discrete acts, ought to be included in definitions of political culture.[10] The crucial point as far as Gabriel Almond was concerned was that, however you define political culture, the distinction is made between behaviour and attitudes and the relationship between them is investigated.[11]

Some strategic culture definitions do separate beliefs and behaviour. Others do not, however. Carnes Lord's definition includes the 'traditional practices' of states.[12] Colin Gray looks at 'modes of action' with respect to force, as well as modes of thought about force.[13] Ken Booth includes both habits and patterns of behaviour in his definition of

[9] Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), p. 1.
[10] See Archie Brown, 'Soviet Political Culture through Soviet Eyes', in Brown, p. 107.
[11] See Archie Brown, 'Introduction', in Brown, pp. 3-4.
[12] Carnes Lord, 'American Strategic Culture', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (July-September 1985), pp. 270-71.
[13] Colin Gray, 'National Style in Strategy: The American Example', *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall 1981), pp. 21-23.

strategic culture.[14] While it is reasonable to consider habits and patterns of behaviour as shedding light on or even constituting culture, a sensible definition ought to make clear that the relationship between behaviour and beliefs is a central issue in the study of strategic culture.

Most definitions of both political culture and strategic culture include some or all of beliefs, attitudes and values. It is worth bearing in mind the distinction made earlier between attitudes (transient views on specific situations), beliefs (more deeply rooted empirical views) and values (normative and fundamental propositions on specific issues).[15] Writers on political culture also distinguish different types of beliefs. The language employed varies from one writer to another. However, some analysts separate core, or basic, beliefs about how the world works, from secondary, rather less important ones.[16] Core beliefs about how the world works may determine more specific beliefs on particular issues. Beliefs may be more or less strongly held, with the core beliefs likely to be held more strongly. There is also a distinction according to how consciously the beliefs are held. Primitive beliefs are those which are held least consciously, which are unstated and unexamined and are apparently confirmed by experience. Often they are very widely shared by the group to which individuals belong.[17]

How useful are these concepts for strategic culture? Most strategic culture writers do not make much effort to separate beliefs into core or secondary or to classify beliefs according to their importance or degree of articulation. Nor is there much discussion of the distinction between conscious and unconscious beliefs. Johnston is one writer who does, however, see a paradigm of beliefs, a set of ranked preferences at the grand strategic

[14] Ken Booth, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed', in Carl G. Jacobsen, (ed), *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 121.
[15] See Samuel Beer and Adam B. Ulam, (eds), *Patterns of Government: The Major Political Systems of Europe* (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 20; and Brown, 'Conclusions', in Brown, p. 161.
[16] The belief systems literature also develops this point. See James Goddard, *Policy as the Implementation of Belief Systems: Crime and Human Nature, 1964-1970* (PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 1993), pp. 65-66.
[17] See Sidney Verba, 'Conclusion', in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, (eds), *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 518.

level, as the core of Chinese strategic culture.[18] It makes a great deal of sense to distinguish core beliefs, on fundamental matters such as the nature of international politics, from secondary beliefs, for example on whether offensive or defensive strategies were preferable. However, whether there exists within a culture a set of ranked preferences which persist over time is problematic. Can a group share such a rigid structure of beliefs, or is a culture a rather more shapeless mix of conscious and unconscious assumptions and beliefs? Notwithstanding this concern, there are likely to be differences in importance of beliefs, and views on core matters may well shape lower level beliefs: how you view the international system may shape whether you want offensive forces or defensive ones. Strategic culture studies thus far have not made much of the differences between conscious and unconscious beliefs. Future studies might benefit from asking how well articulated beliefs are, how self-consciously held they are.

Content of beliefs systems

A key question in political culture research as in strategic culture is: which are the important beliefs to research? These may be the most primitive, the core beliefs and those which are stable over time. At another level, we need to know what subjects are important for strategic behaviour. There may be a problem in defining such areas in advance rather than letting them emerge from documentary analysis: we may be fitting the beliefs of others into our own categories. Equally, however, to believe that we can analyse documents free from preconceptions is a myth, and it is better perhaps to be clear at the outset what we are looking for.

Some clues can be found in the political culture literature, though of course the focus there is on a different subject matter. However, the work of Alexander George deals with international politics.[19] The image which strategic communities hold of their states

[18] Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), especially pp. 37-38.

[19] Alexander L. George, 'The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1969), pp. 201-26. See also Gunnar Sjöblom, 'Some Problems of the Operational Code Approach', in Christer Jönsson, (ed), *Cognitive Dynamics and International Politics* (London: Pinter, 1982), pp. 60-64.

may influence action. Also the images of other states, whether considered friends or enemies, will be important. Basic beliefs about human nature, about ethics and about the role of fate and chance will be significant. For strategic culture, beliefs about conflict will be especially important. Is conflict inevitable, can it be avoided or ameliorated, what are its sources, what are its costs, and is it worth such costs? Also causal beliefs about which means are best to achieve which goals, about how to select goals, and about minimising and assessing risks will be important. In regard to the latter, how are military, political, economic and technological capabilities ranked?

How far have strategic culture analyses covered these points? Alastair Johnston conceptualises a 'central paradigm' of beliefs about the nature of conflict, the nature of enemies and the efficacy of violence.[20] But few others spell out the categories of beliefs which are of most significance, so that it is not clear why some and not other beliefs are singled out for comment. The framework developed for the Langkawi conference spells out a large number of beliefs which are considered to be of significance.[21] If widely used, this would yield better comparative data than individual analyses selecting only certain beliefs, and avoid rather idiosyncratic analyses. It would prevent important beliefs being omitted.

At present, many analyses leave out a number of what might be considered core beliefs: about human nature, the nature of history, or the nature of international politics. The assumption may be that these are universal. In the case of those identified as strategic culture minimalists, the assumption would be that many of these core beliefs are dictated by the nature of the anarchical international system. Instead the focus is on narrower, military beliefs, about the cult of the offensive, for instance. It would be helpful to identify

[20] *Ibid*, p. *ix*.
[21] See Ken Booth and Alan Macmillan, 'Strategic Culture: Framework for Analysis', paper prepared for a conference on 'Strategic Culture and Conflict Resolution in the Asia-Pacific Region', Langkawi Island, Malaysia, 14-17 August 1994. The 'Framework' is reproduced as an appendix to the thesis.

and investigate more fundamental beliefs which could have an impact upon the narrower strategic ones. Also it seems important to ask more questions about the self-image of the referent group. Booth examines the myths about American strategic culture, but might ask how important these myths are for the self-image of the group, and how, even if it is removed from reality, the self-image affects the behaviour of the group.[22]

Identifying beliefs

Identifying the beliefs and values which constitute a strategic culture is obviously of central importance. The crucial point here is that, since beliefs, values and attitudes cannot be observed directly, their existence must be inferred from other sources. Many political culture studies, interested largely in the beliefs and attitudes of the public at large, use surveys and interviews to identify relevant political beliefs and values. Others, looking at elite views, have tended more towards content analysis of official documents, memoirs and public statements.[23] The latter would be more useful for strategic culture, to the extent that it also tends to focus on the decision-making elite, though surveys of the views of, and interviews with, decision-makers, could in some cases be possible and useful. Other possible sources of strategic beliefs are strategic behaviour and symbols. However, various problems attend the use of these sources as indicators of beliefs. These problems are discussed in the literature of political culture.

The use of behaviour carries the risk first of all of circularity: of inferring beliefs from behaviour, then using these same posited beliefs to explain that behaviour. Thus tautological explanations can be fashioned with no evidence to support them. It is possible to infer the existence of sets of beliefs which appear plausible bases for the behaviour under investigation but which may or may not exist. There is a question mark against explanations which begin with regularities in behaviour and infer beliefs which explain

[22] See Ken Booth, 'American Strategy: The Myths Revisited', in Ken Booth and Moorhead Wright, (eds), *American Thinking About Peace and War* (Sussex: Harvester, 1978).
[23] See Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, pp. 50-51.

these regularities, then predict, on the basis of these beliefs, continued regularity. Is there independent evidence of the existence of these beliefs? And why not simply argue that if behaviour is regular it is likely to continue? The main problem here is that factors other than beliefs influence behaviour. Alliance commitments, for example, may force a state to act in ways which do not accord with its strategic culture. As will be discussed, the relationship between behaviour and beliefs is a problematic one, so that to assume that behaviour is a reflection of beliefs is dangerous. The danger can be reduced by looking at behaviour in various areas and at various times to see if there is consistency which would suggest the application of similar reasoning. The use of as many sources as possible as indicators of beliefs is advisable to confirm their existence. However, the fundamental problem remains that beliefs and values cannot be directly observed and so statements about them are based on inference, and that inference could be misleading.

Symbols may also be very useful. Flags, words, music and other symbols can powerfully convey meanings. However, great care needs to be taken with such sources, the meaning of which is never obvious, need not be shared by all of the group, and may be subject to change. Documentary and oral evidence, in the form of official papers, speeches, interviews or surveys, remain probably the most useful sources for getting at the beliefs of decision-makers. These sources are not without problems, as the political culture literature shows. Sources from individuals, for instance, may yield insight into the views of the wider group of which they are members, but the political culture literature warns against the ecological fallacy of inferring the beliefs of a group from those of individual members of it. The whole may be greater than the sum of the parts. In addition, some things may be so obvious that they are not put into words. Fundamental, shared beliefs will rarely be on the agenda for discussion. Another problem is that documents may be intended to justify action, and may not reveal its true motivation - even if the writer knows what that was, for decision-makers may not be aware of all their motivations. It should be stressed here that an important part of the strategic culture is the language of justification. What are considered powerful and legitimate reasons for undertaking certain

actions? Those seeking to understand the defence decision-making scene ought to be interested in how action is justified as well as its motivations. This is discussed further below.

There is little discussion in the strategic culture literature of the reliability and utility of different sources. Some writers use documentary evidence, some infer beliefs from behaviour, some from very general discussions of the wider cultural values of the country. Few identify the problems discussed above. One of the more methodologically reflexive writers is Jack Snyder. In his 1977 RAND Report, Snyder wanted to provide an empirical analysis, yet 'reliable data' on Soviet strategy was often impossible to acquire, he noted. What writings could be seen were produced partly with propaganda in mind, so had to be treated with caution. This left the actions of the Soviets as the best 'valid indicators' of beliefs, though these could be ambiguous and had to be interpreted. His conclusions on Soviet attitudes were therefore tentative, as the evidence was indirect.[24]

Other analysts making use of documentary evidence are Yitzhak Klein and Shu Guang Zhang. Klein tends to take at face value books, reports and lectures by Soviet officials, as well as looking at policy to discover strategic culture. He does not heed the warnings of Snyder about the propaganda element of Soviet writings on strategy.[25] Zhang gained unprecedented though incomplete access to Chinese records for his work, making for an insightful discussion of what the Chinese were thinking.[26] Of course, this depended on his reading of the documents. Other work is more impressionistic. Choi Kang, for instance, asserts the existence of certain strategic cultural beliefs in his work on NorthEast Asia, without making clear how he discovered them or proving they were held.[27] Carnes Lord also tends to assert the existence of certain beliefs, 'proving' this by citing behaviour

[24] Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture*, pp. 4-8.
[25] See Ira J. Klein, *Soviet Strategic Culture, 1917-1965*; Yitzhak Klein, 'The Sources of Soviet Strategic Culture', *The Journal of Soviet Military Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (December 1989), pp. 453-90; and Yitzhak Klein, 'A Theory of Strategic Culture', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January-March 1991), pp. 3-23.
[26] Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949-1958* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992).
[27] Kang Choi, *The Prospect of Arms Control in NorthEast Asia: A Contextual, Procedural, and Perceptual Approach* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ohio State University, 1991).

which seems to support the beliefs.[28] Yet the dangers of selectivity and of circularity lurk here. Other instances of behaviour could possibly be found which contradict the beliefs asserted. In addition, it may be that these beliefs could equally have led to other actions. Therefore evidence for the existence of beliefs and their effect on behaviour remains inconclusive.

Colin Gray and George Tanham explicitly seek to infer beliefs from patterns of behaviour, but this too requires a causal connection between the two.[29] Also, depending on which pieces of behaviour are selected, different beliefs will be produced, leaving room for rather incomplete or indeed biased conclusions. Furthermore, Gray pays little heed to Snyder's warning about the ambiguity of behaviour. His conclusions that the Soviet leaders believe war to be winnable, see international politics as a permanent struggle for power and are engaged on 'an insatiable quest for national security' represent only one possible interpretation of the beliefs underlying Soviet policy, and perhaps say more about Gray than the Soviet Union.[30] Where ambiguous indicators are used, they may indeed function like Rorschach blots, telling more about the observer than the observed. As long as the link between beliefs and behaviour remains problematic, to infer behaviour from beliefs or to seek to prove their existence by reference to behaviour is prey to many difficulties. Most importantly, it does seem to lead into tautologies, where behaviour is used to infer the existence of beliefs and then explained by those beliefs. It is unclear what role the alleged beliefs play. Again, why not simply argue that a country has traditionally behaved in a certain way and so is likely to continue to behave in that way?

Nor does more recent work offer any solution to the problem of identifying beliefs. Eric Herring, for example, has much to say about the role of strategic culture as a tool for understanding and explaining strategic behaviour, but little to say on how cultural beliefs

[28] Lord, pp. 269-93.
[29] Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986); and George Tanham, pp. 129-42.
[30] Gray, pp. 312-13.

are to be divined.[31] Charles Kupchan uses a variety of sources from public opinion data through to film and literature.[32] Alastair Johnson takes strategic writings and documents and subjects them to content analysis to determine the key beliefs.[33] Whichever sources are used, inferring beliefs remains a difficult task, and there is no foolproof method for doing so. The judgement of the analyst and the application of interpretive skills come into play. The sources available vary from case to case. The best solution is to use as many different sources as time and resources allow. The more they tend to confirm each other, the more reliance may be placed upon the findings. Behaviour seems a weak source, and as it is behaviour which we are trying to explain, it is unwise to rely on it alone to infer beliefs, which in turn are used to explain the behaviour. Ultimately, getting at beliefs is a difficult endeavour and unequivocal proof of their existence is unlikely to be found. A degree of speculation and impressionism is unavoidable, but this should not be used as an excuse not to bother with evidence at all. As many documentary sources as possible should be advanced in support of the existence of certain beliefs. Finally, an awareness of the problems involved in inferring beliefs is essential. The political culture literature amply furnishes that.

Origins, change and continuity of strategic culture

The second strategic culture proposition is that strategic cultures are shaped by the distinct historical experience and location of the group. This proposition also entails the view that strategic cultures persist over time. Yet this continuity must be demonstrated as far as possible, and not assumed, and change also has to be taken into account.

[31] Eric Herring, *Danger and Opportunity: Explaining International Crisis Outcomes* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).
[32] Charles A. Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 29.
[33] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, pp. 40-60.

Tracing origins

Scholars of political culture look for the roots of important, persistent beliefs in the basic geography, historical political development and national culture of the group. Taking their cue from this, strategic culture analysts have identified three main sources of strategic beliefs: the geographical location of the group, its history, and its political culture. Yitzhak Klein is alone in rejecting the attempt to trace origins in these factors.[34] Yet exactly how these factors produce beliefs which persist is not made clear by the writers.

One problem is to identify how these sources give rise to beliefs which are sustained, another to identify the relationship between the sources. Some writers identify geography as the most important factor, setting various constraints and creating certain opportunities. There is, however, a danger of being overly deterministic here. Colin Gray, in his writing on geopolitics and strategic culture, arguably falls into this trap, regarding the Soviet Union and the United States as engaged in an inevitable conflict given their geopolitical positions.[35] States with long coastlines do not necessarily become great maritime powers: witness the separate developments of Spain and Italy. What is more, changes in technology can affect the implications of geography, so that they are not timeless. How those implications are perceived is the crucial point, and that may change. The link between geography and attitudes is therefore problematic. Also included under geography are the resources possessed by the state. These may change, and as with geography, their implications may be seen in different ways, which are subject to change. Nevertheless, it may be possible to link attitudes to geography and resources, even if only tentatively.

The historical experience of the referent group is also identified as an important source of beliefs, especially its military experience. Again this is problematic. One issue is, which experience? No clear answer emerges from the political culture literature, beyond

[34] See Yitzhak Klein, 'A Theory of Strategic Culture', p. 9.
[35] In addition to his strategic culture works, see Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of Superpower* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1988), p. 1.

that events significantly affecting the population as a whole are likely to be important.[36] While it seems an obvious point that unique experiences of war will give rise to distinctive attitudes towards it, it must also be noted that views of history are subject to change and may well be inaccurate. Myths develop about the past, or are developed deliberately to encourage certain beliefs by regimes. Furthermore, developments in the present influence our understanding of the past, as historiography shows. There is therefore no clear and easy relationship between past events and current attitudes. It is important to try to trace the formation of beliefs and their continued existence, rather than just to assert that certain events centuries ago caused certain attitudes which still exist today.

Beliefs about the past are seen as important in political culture. It is worth examining whether a nation refers often to its past. Does history play a large part in the culture? And is reference to national history a respectable mode of argument? History is often used in debate, as analogies are searched for, and more or less apt ones discovered.[37] History can also be used to legitimise or justify certain actions. Dramatic events - often wars or revolutions - can be overused and misused in this process. History also contributes to national self-images. In Langkawi framework the attempt is made to relate history and beliefs, but this remains a tentative exercise because of the difficulties discussed above.

Political culture as a source of strategic culture also is problematic, and here there is little help from the political culture literature. What exactly is the relationship between the two? Is strategic culture merely a subset of political culture, different in only some respects? Or has the military experience of the group led to quite different beliefs about internal and international life? It may be that states with much experience of war will develop distinctive political systems, which enable the state to wage war effectively. So centralised, authoritarian systems with highly martial values could develop. Thus political

[36] Walter Rosenbaum, *Political Culture* (London: Nelson, 1975), pp. 16-17.
[37] See Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: The Free Press, 1986); and Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

cultures may be shaped by military factors. Or, democratic ideals may affect the conduct of defence policy. This will vary from state to state. If there exists a literature on the political culture of a group under study, this would however be a valuable resource. Further empirical work is necessary to pin down the relationship of political and strategic culture. The Langkawi framework identifies the link between them as an important area for exploration..

The final point to make here concerns the relationship between all the variables identified. What is important is the interplay between all of them. As the group develops, the implications of its geographical setting and resources can change with events. The key is to see a dynamic process where change takes place, not to search for coherence and be overly deterministic.

Alastair Johnston stresses the importance of starting as far back as possible to identify beliefs and trace their passage forwards through time, rather than starting with current beliefs and looking backwards in time for evidence of prior existence.[38] The temptation in the latter case is to be selective in the search. However, in the Chinese case, the seven military classics offer a convenient starting point. But this is not always so. Where does one start to examine British, or French, strategic culture? Analysis has to start somewhere, and the starting point may be somewhat arbitrary, though perhaps a 'formative period' can be identified.

Change and continuity

The question of change was identified as a crucial one for strategic culture. How do beliefs change? How do changes in beliefs affect the behaviour of states, and therefore perhaps their operational environments, and how do changes in the these operational environments affect beliefs? It is argued in the political culture literature that core beliefs

[38] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 40.

are most resistant to change. Further, new information will likely be assimilated to old. Change will be incremental except where dramatic events occur.

Continuity is stressed in cultural analyses. There are internal psychological processes which cause people to seek to maintain consistency in beliefs, distorting new information if necessary. And there are socialisation processes by which beliefs are passed on to new generations of decision-makers. Both these factors maintain continuity. In addition, bureaucracies play a part in sustaining beliefs. Standard operating procedures and institutional inertia will militate against changing basic assumptions. Yet change cannot be discounted. How has strategic culture dealt with these issues?

The consensus here is that change will occur, though only gradually, except where dramatic events intervene.[39] There is little discussion of how change does and has occurred, however, and perhaps too much emphasis on the importance of continuity. Gray, for instance, writing in 1988, saw the Soviet Union as certain to remain the most pressing source of danger to the West in general and the USA in particular 'for as far into the future as can be claimed contemporarily relevant'.[40] Conceivably he could yet be proved right, in that Russia could emerge once more as a significant threat; and he was surely not alone in failing to foresee the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. But the temptation has been to give too much weight to continuity. It may be also that in looking back at the past of the group under study, too much attention is given to events suggesting continuity, and those striking discordant notes are ignored. Bradley Klein notes a similarity between the strategy of Mahan and modern nuclear war-fighting ideas in US strategic thinking, assuming that since Mahan these ideas have been in currency.[41] But he does not prove that Mahan's ideas lasted through the century; similar ideas could have been developed in the second half of the twentieth century for quite different reasons. Continuity is then problematic.

[39] Kavanagh, *Political Culture*, pp. 37-46.
[40] Gray, *The Geopolitics of Superpower*, p. 1.
[41] Bradley Klein, p. 138.

Future work on strategic culture ought to try to look more precisely at how change occurs and at how things stay the same, than has hitherto been managed. Can socialisation processes be identified which maintain beliefs? Can we see what sort of beliefs change most, what causes change, whether there are lags between changes in circumstances and in ideas?

The utility of strategic culture

If a distinctive strategic culture can be identified, and linked to particular national circumstances and development, can it then be linked to strategic behaviour? In other words, what explanatory work does it do? Similar questions are posed in the political culture literature. One response is that culture has very little utility, for political culture is shaped by political structures. In this case culture is an epiphenomenon. It forms only one link in a longer causal chain. It is something to be explained rather than something which does explain. The political culture literature suggests a number of counter arguments. In the first place, even if it is granted that culture does represent an epiphenomenon, it could still be of use as it would be part of the explanation, if not the whole explanation. That other factors need to be brought into the analysis may diminish but does not demolish the significance of culture. In addition, the political culture literature points out that whatever gives life to beliefs in the first place, if passed down to new generations they can outlive the immediate circumstances from which they originated. Beliefs encouraged by a governmental elite and inculcated into the population for self-serving purposes at one time may come to shape the thinking of the next generation of decision-makers, unaware of why they were nurtured initially. Political culture studies began from the observation that stable political systems transferred to newly independent states often failed to reproduce stability in their changed settings. The existing political culture, which may have been shaped by older political structures, undermined the new political structures. A final point to note here is that some political culture writers - notably those like Stephen White who

have investigated political culture in Communist states - attempt to account for the origins of beliefs in historical experience and other factors.[42] They therefore ask what explains strategic culture as well as what it explains.

Overall, the political culture literature shows the relationship between cultures and structures to be a complicated one. Each interacts with the other over time. Their relative importance and causal relationship are very difficult to ascertain. This mirrors the wider social science debate on structure versus agency. What this implies for strategic culture is that the relationship between strategic cultures and structures will be similarly complicated. There is support for the view that new governments may not be able to change quickly the beliefs and values of the populations they govern. Old beliefs may persist. The political culture literature therefore offers support to Alastair Johnston's argument that regimes may become controlled by cultural beliefs which earlier elites encouraged into being.[43] The above analysis also shows that it is worth pursuing the study of strategic culture, as it cannot merely be assumed that analysis of structures yields all the answers.

Extended to the international realm, this analysis suggests that reliance upon a particular notion of how the structure of the international system operates to explain the strategic behaviour of states is also too simple. Neo-realist accounts privilege structural over cultural explanations, believing that the anarchical nature of the international system implies a self-help logic which state leaders must recognise. However, current state leaders could be facing not an immutable structure but rather a cultural phenomenon. The beliefs of previous leaders, shaped by their own particular experiences of war and insecurity, could continue to imprison their successors. This offers encouragement to writers like Bradley Klein who see utility in strategic culture as a means of historicising the assumptions of neo-realism.[44] It also suggests that the position of strategic culturalists,

[42] See for instance White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*.
[43] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 18.
[44] Bradley Klein, p. 136.

who hold that states may act in ways out of line with the claimed demands of the structure of the international system, has some mileage in it. Both strategic culture minimalists and maximalists have their positions strengthened by the finding that structures leave room for the operation of cultural influences.

A number of questions can usefully be asked, therefore, when investigating the strategic cultures of states, and some will be pursued in the case study chapters. To what extent is the strategic culture imposed by the elite, and to what extent is the elite itself influenced or imprisoned by the culture? To what extent are neo-realist notions of the nature of the international system supported by strategic cultures, in the present and the past? Do beliefs vary across cultures, undermining notions of a global logic of anarchy? Do beliefs vary across time, suggesting that change is possible? Do neo-realist views of the logic of anarchy seem to be rooted in the experiences of states in particular times and places?

Another criticism of political culture is that rational choice theory is a more efficient vehicle for explaining the behaviour of political actors than culture. Proponents of political culture however have made the case that rational choice alone is insufficient to explain behaviour. They buttress strategic culture writers in the view that rationality is at least tempered by deep-seated beliefs and values, and that assumptions of a universal rationality guiding behaviour will produce misleading analysis. This too is a question which should be pursued in the case study chapters. To what extent can strategic behaviour be said to be 'rational' only in terms of the beliefs and values of a particular culture?

If strategic culture can play a part in explaining particular decisions, how important a part? Alastair Johnston provides a sophisticated discussion of the range of possibilities.[45] At one extreme culture can determine particular policy outcomes. At the other it may

[45] Johnston, pp. 53-54.

merely provide justification for action, or fulfil an instrumental role. Arguments need to be framed in language which is acceptable to the group whose culture is under investigation if they are to be taken seriously. Whatever the motives of actors, they must be sensitive to culturally approved ways of advancing arguments and culturally approved bases for action. In between these extremes, Johnston sees culture as creating predispositions to certain actions or types of action, closing off some possibilities and limiting the range of choice open to decision-makers. It provides a set of ranked preferences. The key difficulty, he believes, in determining the influence of strategic culture is to isolate its effects from those of other, non-cultural variables. This must be done if the relative importance of strategic culture is to be assessed. Yet separating cultural from non-cultural variables is far from straightforward. Different cultures may put different spins on structural factors, or the importance of technology. Bureaucratic politics may vary in different national cultures.[46] The distinction between cultural and non-cultural variables is difficult to draw. Comparative studies could help to factor our non-cultural variables, but the previous chapter shows there are difficulties with these also. If states operating in the same system, with similar capabilities and interests, formulate different solutions to the same problem, then the importance of beliefs and values appears much more stark. Against that, in comparative studies there are problems of equivalence to guard against. Are the states under consideration really facing equivalent problems, in equivalent situations? Are equivalent sources being used? These are among the awkward questions in need of answers. Nevertheless, rigorous comparative studies, which have yet to be carried out on strategic culture, should be of importance in showing how much similarity in beliefs exists across cultures and giving a more accurate view of how much difference strategic culture makes.

The consensus in the strategic culture literature is that strategic culture sets the terms of debate, it acts as a prism through which the world is perceived, it rules out certain options for consideration, it creates pre-dispositions towards certain courses of

[46] See Booth, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed', p. 124.

action. In this strategic culture follows on from much political culture writing. There emerges, however, no cast iron means of detecting and isolating the effect of culture or beliefs on behaviour.

Another approach sees culture as being of value more for producing a general understanding of the context of decision-making than for directly explaining particular actions. So textbooks on politics often contain an introductory section on the political culture of the state under investigation, even if it is not used directly to account for political behaviour. Nevertheless, a rich understanding of political activity, it is argued, requires comprehension of the webs of beliefs and values in which decision-makers are suspended. Taken slightly further, culture is useful not so much in providing links between cause and effect, but in illuminating the meaning which behaviour has to political actors. In the words of Lucian Pye, political culture 'gives meaning, predictability and form to the political process'.[47] The point of this interpretive form of explanation is to try to connect 'action to its sense rather than behaviour to its determinants'.[48]

There are, therefore, various possible ways in which strategic culture may affect strategic behaviour. In the political culture and the strategic culture literatures these possibilities are discussed, but no consensus emerges on the best way to proceed. In the case study sections the task thus becomes to ask in which ways the operation of strategic culture can be detected.

Definition and methodology

Let us now offer a definition of strategic culture. Strategic culture refers to the values, beliefs and attitudes held within different groups regarding the use or threat to use force. These values, beliefs and attitudes are affected by the unique circumstances and historical

[47] Lucian Pye, 'Introduction', in Pye and Verba, p. 7.
[48] Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (London: Fontana, 1993), p. 34.

development of the state and are reflected in symbols, customs, habits, and patterns of strategic behaviour. Strategic culture involves the propositions already discussed. The first proposition is that different collectivities have distinct beliefs, attitudes and ways of thinking about the use of force. The second is that these beliefs, attitudes and ways of thinking are shaped by the unique geographical setting and historical development of the group, especially in the strategic and political fields. The final proposition is that the strategic debate and behaviour of the group will be affected by its distinctive strategic culture. The study of strategic culture will therefore help with understanding of the discourses and debates on strategy held within the group, and with explaining its behaviour in the strategic realm. Finally, although continuity is stressed, change is also accepted as taking place, and sensitivity to change is crucial.

The above analysis ended with a more interpretive approach to understanding the effect of culture, and this leads into the question of methodology. How can we study culture and its effects? On the one hand there are those who favour a highly positivist approach. Alastair Johnson falls into this category through his insistence that claims of knowledge about strategic culture must be falsifiable through empirical investigation, and that this knowledge must be in a form which allows the effects of strategic culture to be tested against other modes of explanation. Knowledge which fails these tests is worthless.[49] Likewise, the study of political culture gained impetus through the belief that survey methods could yield hard empirical data about culture.

Others, however, have found such methods of limited utility in tackling such a slippery subject as culture. Can culture be measured or quantified? Can useful falsifiable statements be derived about the nebulous subject of culture, or is it a factor the influence of which cannot be pinned down? The case is made, therefore, for a more interpretive approach, trading rigour for richness. Accepting that any statement about culture could probably be falsified as its influence is so varied, such an approach would relax the

[49] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 29.

standards of proof for the effects of culture. Critics from the positivist position would argue that, as well as not yielding comparative and falsifiable data, this type of approach risks inferring the existence of beliefs and values, and making claims about their effects, with no foundation. It could involve constructing a plausible and coherent account of strategic behaviour on the basis of beliefs which may not exist or affect action. Within both the political culture and belief systems literatures this divide exists between more and less positivistic approaches.

Where you stand on these methodological issues, as well as on the issue of the utility of strategic culture, will determine how and indeed whether you proceed with the study of strategic culture. For a neo-realist scholar, the study of strategic culture may appear not to be worthwhile. It involves expending a great deal of effort for meagre returns in terms of explanatory power. For a strong positivist, producing falsifiable statements and so worthwhile knowledge about cultures may appear impossible, while more interpretivist scholars will be more optimistic about producing useful knowledge. The neo-realist who pursues the study of strategic culture is likely to interested not in beliefs about the nature of international politics, as the system determines these, but in lower level beliefs about when and how force should be used. Opponents of neo-realism will see all beliefs as up for investigation and look to how they are formed rather than assuming some to be inevitable.

The approach adopted in the remainder of the thesis is a more interpretive one, and one which seeks to question the assumptions of neo-realism. To identify the existence of a group's strategic culture, to link the key beliefs within it to historical experience and the other factors outlined above, and to isolate the effect of the culture upon strategic behaviour, are tasks fraught with methodological difficulties. If cultures change, albeit slowly, like glaciers the movement of which is undetectable except over long time periods, then any description of the content of a culture is a snapshot in time, and is always open to challenge at another time. If cultures create predispositions to action but do not determine

it, then prediction is impossible. If individuals within the group vary then exceptions will always be found to any generalisation. The contention here is, therefore, that the study of strategic culture must remain an interpretive pursuit, backed by what evidence can be found in order to minimise the risks of flights of fancy. It is useful also to enquire about the existence and origins of beliefs which neo-realists would argue are imposed by the anarchic nature of the international system. Can these be seen to have roots in particular historical experiences of a group?

Ultimately, to show the importance of specifically national factors on strategy, comparative studies are required to help factor out variables acting on all states. For comparative data to be generated, a common research framework is needed. That provided for the participants in the Asia-Pacific strategic culture project is a useful basis for investigation, signalling the key areas which ought to be of interest, and suggesting ways in which strategic culture may operate. It is therefore reproduced here, slightly modified, as a guide to the operation of strategic culture and a rough basis for the following analysis of British strategic culture.[50] Given cultural variety, not all of it will be useful for all states or groups. However, it offers a starting point for analysis.

Before turning to the framework, a few points about its use should be made. Rather than begin with current attitudes and work back, looking for evidence of their existence in the past, it is better to begin as far back in history as possible and work forward. Then the temptation to look only for evidence that current attitudes already existed before, and ignore evidence of other attitudes, may be avoided. It is necessary to be sensitive to discontinuities as well as continuity, to show whether some beliefs have died out. The point in looking at the past will be to establish whether continuity does exist. This is the first stage in the strategic culture argument. If continuity in attitudes can be shown, then the next step is to relate them to specifically national features. This is the most speculative, interpretive part of the exercise, for documents and other sources will be rarer the deeper in time you go.

[50] The original framework is included in an appendix to the thesis.

In the contemporary period, more detailed sources may be available and better evidence of attitudes should be found. Using documentary and whatever other sources may be available, the key strategic beliefs need to be pinned down and their continuity with the past established. A profile of the strategic culture of the group should be drawn up, asking what are the key beliefs, but also how widely shared they are, how stable, how coherent. Any other salient characteristics of the culture could be spelled out.

Strategic Culture: Framework For Analysis

The framework seeks to facilitate research into whether, for the referent group in question, particular conditions have indeed given rise to or shaped distinctive beliefs about the use of force which have been sustained over time and continue to the present day.

(A) *Sources of strategic culture*

The three elements below do not exhaust sources of explanation of strategic culture, but they do appear to be the most significant. Other sources could be embraced by them. Nor are they wholly separate categories. Rather it is the interaction of geography, history and political systems which is of interest. The implications of geography may change over time as technologies progress, for instance, and alliances may shift, resources may dwindle and revolutions occur. Moreover, and a related point, how these factors are viewed by contemporaries is subject to change: historical events can disappear from the national consciousness or be re-interpreted, as could the implications of geography. Current events and attitudes will also influence how the implications of historical experience, geography and so on are interpreted. There is a continuous process of feedback in which self-conscious leaders will think again about these factors, jettison some old ideas, introduce new ones, or revive old ideas and experiences.

Finally, it is not being argued here is that the position of a state, the resources available to it and its historical development suggest only one future course for it. Geopolitics is not seen as determining defence policy, for example. States with long coastlines need not necessarily become strong maritime powers. Different options will be available, but what these are will be shaped by the factors below. Which option is selected may also be shaped by these factors. And even as geographic or technological conditions change, old attitudes may persist.

1. Geography and resources

Geography is obviously a key factor in any country's thinking about its security. 'Geography is the bones of strategy', said Theodore Ropp.[51] In examining a group's strategic culture, the salient points of its geographic setting need to be identified and their possible strategic implications considered. All states are uniquely situated, of course, so the framework cannot cover all possibilities, but at least a few basic questions which ought to be asked can be specified. Others may be needed for particular states.

An obvious place to start with is the borders of the state. Does it have natural barriers around it - mountains, seas, deserts or rivers? Groups lacking such barriers, with no secure borders, are vulnerable to invasion and may well have experienced many interventions and invasions in their histories, with important effects on their attitudes to security. The Soviet Union, for instance, and imperial Russia before it, have often been invaded, which could be argued to have engendered a sense of insecurity leading to high and constant defence preparations. On the other side of the coin, such states may find it easier to expand, and perhaps equate security with possession of territory. States which have secure natural borders could on the other hand develop a false sense of security, or

[51] Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World* (London and New York: Collier-Macmillan, new revised edition, 1959), p. 5.

simply a relaxed attitude towards security, with periods of low defence spending increasing when specific threats emerge. Such states may find it harder then to prepare to meet threats over longer periods of time.

The location of the state may have a considerable effect upon its outlook on the world. Those who are cut off, whether by mountains or sea, and are self-sufficient, could develop into isolationists, seeking to limit contact with the outside world; or they could become expansive nations, seeking contact with others. They could also develop, as is alleged with the USA and China, feelings of exceptionalism from and possibly superiority over others. They are then less likely to be influenced by foreign thought.

The presence of largely hostile or friendly neighbours can exacerbate the effects of the possession or lack of secure borders. Russia and the Soviet Union have often faced hostile states to the West, for instance. The United States, by contrast, as well as being blessed with oceans on its western and eastern borders, has neighbours to the south and north which have never posed much threat to it. Whereas Russia and the Soviet Union have tended therefore to fight on their own territory, the USA has tended to fight on other people's territory, its own being relatively invulnerable. States which avoid seeing the horrors of war at first hand may well be less inhibited about using force than those who have seen much fighting (at least until extensive media coverage of wars); the latter may well become determined, as arguably the Soviets did, to strike the first blow in a war so as to avoid fighting again on their own ground.

Although enemies may become friends and vice versa over time, intense and bitter rivalries will not disappear quickly, and will likely persist beyond the immediate disputes that created them. Feelings of having suffered at the hands of another and the need for revenge may take generations to wane. It is therefore important to look at the traditional friendships and rivalries which exist.

The location of a state may also be important for the development of its armed forces. States with long coastlines may well develop large navies as a first line of defence, while those with little coastline may develop armies as the senior service. This can set patterns of interservice competition for the future, even should sea power become more, or less, important.

The size of territory of a state also is likely to be significant, as small states can afford to lose less territory, while larger states can absorb attacks. On the other hand, small states have shorter borders to defend and can reinforce weak points rapidly, while larger states may need greater forces in position at all times to repel surprise attacks. Even as circumstances change, these basic geographic factors may leave in place peculiar attitudes towards security and the use of force.

The resources available to a state will also be important in constraining its actions, and again, even when changes take place in these, old attitudes may persist. Poor internal communications compound the problems referred to above for large states, while good communications ameliorate them. The size and distribution of a state's population are also likely to be significant. States with limited populations may need to develop strategies maximising the use of technology and devote more time to training and tactics, and seek to avoid long attritional wars, while those with ample manpower may develop less in these directions. Military styles may then develop which outlast changes in populations. Where populations are concentrated also different strategies may need to be developed for their protection than where they are widespread. So geographical and resource conditions could lead to predispositions towards offensive or defensive strategies, forward or deep defence.

The effect on strategy of the presence or absence of other strategically-relevant resources will also be important. Dependence on others for resources may lead to a history of appeasement, though it could equally lead to one of conquest. Self-sufficiency also is likely to affect a state's attitude to allies. As with population, the ability to produce

adequate weaponry - or lack thereof - will affect strategy, tactics and training. In particular, states leading the way in technology may develop strategies to match. The United States is often, for example, held to prefer to expend vast resources rather than suffer casualties, to seek technological solutions to problems. Once more, the effect of these factors may outlive the circumstances which produced them.

2. History and experience

To narrow down a huge category, initial questions might be: which have been the most important periods and events in the group's history? Can what might be called 'formative years' be identified? Which have been the most important historical events? What are the most significant historical memories? And where are areas of amnesia to be found? Are there any apparently notable events which are forgotten?

In particular of course the historical experiences of states on matters of war and peace are going to be important. Has the state much experience of war? Has it gone into battle frequently or rarely? What sort of experience has it had? Has the group more often been the aggressor, or the attacked? Has it on the whole been successful in war, or more often lost out, or is its experience mixed? Have the costs of war - human, material, territorial - been large or small? Have the spoils been significant? Has fighting taken place on the territory of other groups or the referent group itself? Has the civilian sector of the group suffered directly at the hands of the enemy, or only indirectly, through siege for example? These sorts of experiences could shape various beliefs about war: about whether war is a natural state, or whether peace is; about whether war is inevitable, or can be avoided; about whether the military instrument should be employed only in the last resort, or whether it remains an effective Clausewitzian instrument of policy, to be used where appropriate; about whether or not war is hell. Those with successful military experience at low cost, for example, may be inclined to view the use of force as more acceptable than others.

Experience of war need not lead in any particular direction. Those with mainly terrible experiences may seek to avoid war, but could also maintain and bear very high levels of preparation in case of future war, or try to ensure that future wars, if necessary, were won, or fought on the territory of others. The Soviet Union, for example, often invaded, is said to have adopted an offensive strategy to ensure that it would not be forced again into long defensive wars on its own territory with huge losses before the invader could be expelled. But military experience is likely to affect how threats are perceived and assessed. Those with bad experiences are likely to be more paranoid, more likely to overinsure and take no chances in security. Those whose experiences are less daunting may be more relaxed, or complacent, about threats.

The experience of states in specific areas will be likely to affect attitudes towards those areas. For instance, states with, or lacking, experience of limited wars may hold distinctive attitudes to limited wars reflecting that experience. Experience of crises short of war may also be important in shaping how future crises are handled, whether confrontation is sought or avoided. Experiences of alliance will be important also for shaping attitudes. Have allies been reliable in the past or not? Has the group been let down by allies? Has it been drawn into unwanted conflicts on their behalf? This sort of experience may shape whether the group is happy to see security as interdependent or seeks absolute independence in security. Again, successful experience of arms control negotiations will likely foster the belief that this is a profitable enterprise, whereas those who have failed to reach agreements or seen them flouted will probably be less impressed.

It is important to identify the major symbolic events and people for each state, and the myths surrounding them. What are the most significant historical memories and oversights about war and peace? How is strategic history perceived, and which events are given most meaning? In the case of Britain, for example, 'Hitler', 'Munich', 'Appeasement', 'Dunkirk' and 'Churchill' and 'the Blitz' are words with great mythical power and meaning.

Recent scholarship might show that during the Blitz there was not a united, defiant, classless society in London; yet the Blitz nevertheless conjures up the image of British pluck in the face of adversity, of the whole nation pulling together.[52] Similarly, though Dunkirk may appear to the outsider to have been a near disastrous rout and retreat for the British, which could have been a calamitous defeat had the German pressed home their advantage to the full, the word Dunkirk conveys the sense of tenacious fighting spirit. To understand the discourse of British security policy it is crucial to identify the experiences perceived to be crucial, invoked in discussion in support of arguments.

Another important area to examine is the history of the group's strategic thinking. Is there a tradition of thinking about strategic issues? Is there a body of writing on the group's strategic situation? Who have been the influential sources of strategic thought? Were they soldiers, political leaders, or civilians? Did they come from within or outside the country? Have other thinkers been forced on the group or adopted by choice? Why has one been chosen over others - to fit in with existing beliefs? What did they say? Were they more concerned with tactical or grand strategic matters? Were they interested in moral dimensions? Whose ideas are still thought relevant? Why? Have others faded away? Have there been distinctive strategic sub-cultures - ethnic, class, military etc.?

And what generalisations can be made about the country's strategic doctrine (its plans and execution regarding the threat and use of force)? Is it possible to talk about a distinctive national style? Was there any distinctive and repeated behaviour: for example, a tendency to act unilaterally versus a tendency to be 'alliance-prone'? Or a pattern of military complacency and unpreparedness? Or a history of deference to big neighbours? Or a readiness to use the military instrument? Or a predisposition to over-insurance in military terms? What has been the relationship between thought and doctrine? Has the former prompted the other or been ignored?

[52] See Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1991).

What of the history of the referent group itself? Has it always formed one state? Has it merged with others, or been taken over, or taken over others? What ethnic mixes are involved? What foreign influence has there been over the state - through invasion, colonisation, alliances, or inclusion in another state's sphere of influence? Has the group a history of empire-building or foreign domination? Which groups dominate the current state? Have they always done so? Do other groups form coherent subcultures? How much of an effort has there been at times to manufacture or control history? Has the elite sought to portray the group's history in a certain light to gain support for its policies? Has this led to certain events being overlooked or overemphasised? Has coherence in history been manufactured in the educational system or by politicians?

Has the group been a great power or a small power in the past? If it is a former great power, now in decline, is there an attempt to maintain the attributes of a great power? Is there a struggle to safeguard old commitments? Is great power status seen as important? Is the need for continued global influence felt? Is there a mood of pessimism about continued decline in the future? Dean Acheson famously said of Britain that it had lost an empire and not yet found a role. Are outlooks shaped by past glories? Or has the group for some time been gaining in strategic power and does it hold a more optimistic outlook for the future? Are there legacies of past poverty or riches: in the case of the former, strategic thinking may be based on deception and manoeuvre rather than confrontation, whereas the latter may seek decisive battles.

3. Political structure and defence organisation

What traditionally have been the most important features of the country's political system? Has it been liberal-democratic, fascist or communist, centralised or decentralised, open or closed, pluralist or dominated by narrow elites? Is there a tradition of stability or instability? Has the system undergone any radical change or revolution? Can any generalisations be made about the type of polity and its military behaviour? Has the nature

of the polity or official ideology affected the attitudes towards the use of force and security policy? Have political leaders attempted to apply the principles on which the domestic system is based to foreign and defence policy? Or have external conditions shaped internal political development: for instance, have Russian and Soviet absolutism been influenced by the hostile strategic environment in which those states operated?

The political culture approach assumes that these factors and many others result in the formation of a distinctive political culture in the state which affects the operation of the political system. It may give rise to a style of policy: in the case of Britain, it is argued, with its unwritten constitution and reliance on precedent rather than rules, a pragmatic, muddling through sort of style has evolved.[53] One of the most difficult questions faced by students of strategic culture is its relationship with the concept of political culture. How do the two interrelate? Should we regard strategic culture as a branch, or subset, of political culture? Do the same factors shape both strategic and political culture? Or have the factors shaping the strategic culture been different, resulting in a distinctive set of beliefs and decision-making style? Perhaps the question to ask of each state is how closely these two cultures are related. It may be that in more martial states with long histories of conflict the political culture has been shaped by strategic factors, and that in more peaceful states, the reverse obtains: domestic political development shapes military policy.

In any case, work done on political culture will be a valuable resource in thinking about strategic culture. What have been the main features of the country's political culture? What are the main factors shaping the political culture? How does the political culture shape the making and execution of the country's strategic policy? For example, to what extent does ideology affect the pattern of allies and enemies? Going deeper into cultural values in society, is there an identifiable militarist tradition? If so, how does it manifest itself, for instance in relation to issues like conscription or the use of force? What are the sources of militarism? What impact do ethical, religious and gender factors have on

[53] This point is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

strategic culture? What value do people place on human life, for instance? How do they see martyrdom? Do particular societies or groups have exaggerated notions of masculinity and violence? Do such attitudes affect the prospects for using force, or working for conflict resolution?

Has public opinion had much of a role to play in policy-making? Is there any tradition of pacifism, of anti-war protests or peace movements? Has it been successful? Are there important military pressure groups, like military-industrial complexes? Have civilian strategists had much input into policy? Or has military strategy been the preserve of the elite?

In particular, what have been the main features of the country's defence decision-making organisation, in war and in peace? How is it organised? Which are the key ministries? How is policy made? Are there separate foreign and defence ministries, and how do they co-ordinate - are foreign policy commitments and defence forces well-matched? Are the tasks of understanding other countries and assessing their interests and intentions divorced from, or closely linked to, the tasks of preparing forces to counter threats? How powerful are military personnel within the defence ministry? Who makes defence policy: civilians or the military establishment? Is there much crossover between the military and civilian sectors? Have the armed forces involved themselves in politics? What has been the division of labour between military and civilians officials in defence policy? Is there a tradition of effective political control over the armed forces, or intervention by politicians in military planning, or a tradition of the armed forces intervening in politics? Is there a co-operative or an adversarial relationship between the two groups? Are their views distinct or similar? Is there much trust between the two? Have powerful leaders dictated military policy? The answers to these questions will indicate whether defence policy is best understood as military strategy or bureaucratic fudge.

Within the military establishment, what type of planning goes on? It is claimed that the USA engages in war planning not strategy, that it is concerned more with the management of its armed forces, logistics and administration, than with devising strategy and tactics.[54] Are there similar blind spots or biases in other countries? Is there traditionally much interservice rivalry? Is any one service dominant, or traditionally senior? How is rivalry between services managed? Who adjudicates in disputes? Has there more often been a professional or a conscript army? What effect have these factors had on the strategic culture of the country? Is it easier to contemplate the use of force with a well-trained professional army than with a conscript army? Are certain types of operations or strategies made easier or more difficult depending on the composition of the armed forces? Are certain types of mission or force preserved by the institutional power of one service even if no longer appropriate?

(B) *Traditional Content of Strategic Culture*

Having posed some questions about the sources of strategic culture, the next stage is to draw up a profile of the country's traditional strategic culture. This will involve relating the sources to the formation of particular strategic beliefs and to patterns of strategic behaviour. Can strong and distinctive beliefs about the use and role of force be discerned, and have these beliefs led to distinctive patterns of behaviour in the strategic realm? In this essentially historical section surveys of traditional thought and behaviour should be provided, before turning to contemporary beliefs. (It is necessary to be flexible about the dividing line between 'traditional' and 'contemporary': for some countries 1945 might be the significant turning point, for others it might be the date of national independence or the date of the founding of a new political system.)

To begin with, what conclusions can be drawn about the core beliefs of the culture which impinge upon strategy? These core beliefs are the most fundamental of the culture,

[54] See for instance Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, pp. 40-44.

the most deeply held and persistent. They give rise to other, lower level, or secondary beliefs discussed below. At the same time as looking at these beliefs themselves, it is interesting to note how well articulated they are, or how far they are unconscious; whether behaviour is openly based upon them, or whether these beliefs in the form of unstated assumptions guide action. Core beliefs are more likely than secondary ones to be unstated and unexamined, regarded perhaps as 'natural' and obvious.

Various core belief areas can be identified. Which are most relevant for each country, how they are prioritised, will vary from country to country. The following seem likely to have most universal relevance. They are not mutually exclusive and will overlap. Nor need there be total consistency among them. It is possible that tensions exist between different beliefs and values, and indeed such tensions may characterise and distinguish the group from others.

It is important at this point also to raise questions of continuity and change. Obviously what is being stressed by strategic culture studies is continuity. The proposition is that old habits die hard, that there is considerable continuity over time of basic beliefs. However, change clearly occurs, and that needs to be taken into account. Is it possible to discern processes of evolutionary change at work? Have beliefs gradually altered over time, towards the use of force, for example? Have there been sudden changes caused by dramatic events, for instance? Has change been linked to new developments, new technologies? Have new regimes attempted to manufacture change, and with what success? How does change occur? Is there a lag between new developments and changes in beliefs? Are there discernible trends of change in beliefs?

It is important also to look at what sustains beliefs. How are strategic beliefs passed on? Within the defence organisation, are there conscious socialisation processes at work? How are officers educated and soldiers trained? What military academies exist? What military manuals and codes of behaviour exist? Have there been periods when beliefs

have outlived their relevance? Can it be shown that beliefs are passed on to new generations, rather than new generations simply arriving at the same beliefs as their predecessors because of similar situations?

Core beliefs and values

1. The nature of war

How are war and the use of force seen by the group? Is war regarded as inevitable, or avoidable? Is it regarded as a rational policy instrument to be used when it will be effective, or as a horrific event to be countenanced only as a last resort? What sort of objectives is the use of force believed to serve? How high a priority is given to outright victory, how much to victory denial, negotiated settlements? What is the relationship between war, politics and strategy - does strategy take over once war starts, or does politics continue to be supreme and determine the character of the conflict? How is strategy defined?

2. The nature of history

Is there a sense of history as an important variable? Is the history of the group seen as offering a guide to future action? Have there been many appeals to history to justify policy? Is there a deep sense of tradition and the importance of maintaining it? Or is there a more forward-looking attitude, more accepting of change and innovation?

3. The nature of international politics

Is the international political arena seen as a conflictual one, a self-help system under which the state must protect its own interests? Or is there room for co-operation? Are there notions of détente or peaceful coexistence? Is the state seen as the crucial actor? Is power seen as a crucial factor, and the balancing of power as important? Or does the state seek a preponderance of power? How is power defined - largely in military terms? How are interests calculated?

4. The role of alliances

On a related matter, are alliances seen in a positive or a negative light? Does the group regard self-reliance as a virtue and a priority, or is the forming of alliances, and membership of international institutions, seen as important?

5. Self-image

How does the group see itself? What sort of state does it think of itself as - honourable, self-reliant, brave, good at fighting, morally right, supportive of good causes, cautious, a good ally? What are the chief characteristics of the self-image? Is there guilt about past actions or pride? Is there confidence or not? Is there optimism about the future? Is the self-image accepted or challenged by other states? Is it a distortion of the 'objective' reality? Is it a deliberate distortion - manipulated by politicians? What have historians and writers on strategy had to say about their own state? Assuming these scholars are part of the strategic culture, what is their view of their state? Historiography must form part of the self-image.

6. The nature of security

Is the group insecure, or confident about its security? Could it be characterised as paranoid, or as complacent? How is security defined: in largely military terms? Or do economic, political, social, environmental security concerns figure? Is interdependence in security acceptable, or is independence sought? What threats are perceived, and how are they evaluated? Are enemy intentions or capabilities more the basis of threat assessment? Is the security of the group itself all that matters, or are the needs of allies, or spheres of interest, taken into account?

7. Human nature

Is there a distinctive view of human nature, as essentially good, bad or neutral? Are all

peoples seen in the same light, or are distinctions made about the nature of human kind according to race, nationality? Are some nations seen in particularly poor lights? Is there a Manichean view of the world as divided between good and bad peoples, struggling with each other? Is there a belief that lessons can be learned from other cultures, or a desire to avoid contact with them?

8. Morality

What is the importance attached to notions of morality? What is distinctive about the moral code of the group? How important is individual human life? How important is the good of the community as a whole, in relation to individual life? How is martyrdom viewed? How is war seen morally - is there a tradition of just war thinking, for example? Is international law to be respected or flouted? In war, are the principles of proportionality and discrimination to be upheld?

9. The role of armed forces

Are the armed forces regarded with respect or fear? As a necessary evil, a proud and courageous guarantor of security, a force which could get out of hand? Is there a martial tradition in society? How far has the state become militarised?

Secondary beliefs and behaviour

At a rather lower level, secondary beliefs exist. These are less firmly held than the core beliefs, more open to question and examination, and more closely linked to actual behaviour. They concern much more specific policy areas. Below are listed some of what are likely to be important secondary belief areas. As well as describing these beliefs it will be useful to note patterns of behaviour which reflect them.

1. What type of strategy has the state preferred? Have offensive or defensive strategies

traditionally been favoured? Is there a tradition of deception and manoeuvre, or of seeking decisive battles? Have short wars been preferred, or long, attritional conflicts? Are land, sea or air forces favoured?

2. Have international agreements been favoured as a means of attaining security? Have arms control treaties been sought and adhered to, or less formal agreements?

3. Have international institutions been used for security? Are they regarded as legitimate actors in security, to be supported?

4. Has technology been seen as vital to warfare? Has the state sought to acquire the most up-to-date technology, engaged in technological arms races? Or has it relied on quantity, or tactical ability instead?

5. Is it accepted that high levels of defence spending in peacetime are a necessary price of security? Is there a high level of military preparedness?

6. How are crises seen - as opportunities to be exploited or as dangers to be managed? Is there any tradition of brinkmanship, or of backing down in crises? Is there a distinctive crisis style?

7. Are there traditional enemies or allies who are believed to be likely to continue to be threats or friends in the future?

8. Is there a tradition of power projection, a belief that it is important to be able to operate militarily abroad? Is there a tradition of intervention in other states?

9. Is there an identifiable decision-making style, a belief in certain ways of managing defence? Is there a tradition of secrecy or openness? Have some groups had more say in

defence planning than others? Is the say of some groups believed to be more legitimate than of others?

10. What can be said of relations between the services? Is one dominant, are there ways of managing disputes between the services? Is there a tradition of wrangling, or bitterness? Are decisions the result of compromise?

A final important question is: how widely shared are these beliefs? Is there a main, dominant culture? Or is the culture very fragmented? Are there important sub-cultures? How are they organised - along bureaucratic lines? Have the different services, for example, as a result of different traditional interests and experience, developed beliefs which are significantly different from the main culture? Are there pacifist sub-cultures? Or are there sub-cultures on particular issues, groups from across organisational lines who share beliefs on certain issues?

(C) *Contemporary Strategic Culture*

The country's contemporary strategic beliefs and attitudes can now be examined. The critical issue here is how far these contemporary beliefs are in line with or deviate from the traditional beliefs identified above. Have changes in technology or situation or resources led to wholesale breaks with previous beliefs, or have older beliefs merely been modified to take into account new situations? Have beliefs on nuclear strategy, for example, drawn upon older beliefs, or rejected them? Can continuity be demonstrated with the past? The strategic beliefs and values of the group should be examined in the same categories as below with a view to determining the degree of match. To what extent can contemporary policy be explained in terms of continued adherence to traditional beliefs about the use of force? To what extent might it and has it been better explained in other ways? What is the relationship between different explanatory systems? If policy can be explained in terms of

calculations of interest, does that depend upon interests being defined according to peculiar national beliefs and values? If bureaucratic politics explains policy, are the bureaucracies involved nonetheless rooted in the strategic culture of the state? If the strategic culture approach seems to offer no real explanatory power, then that should be made clear: there is nothing to be gained from trying to make more of strategic culture than the evidence allows.

We have now entered a post-Cold War strategic environment. How has the country reacted to this? Are traditional and very recent attitudes and policies still operating? Has there been any change in them? Has any 'new thinking' on security taken place, as in Gorbachev's strategic cultural revolution in the mid-1980s? It is interesting to consider whether attitudes and beliefs and policy have changed as the environment has over the past five years, or remained the same.

Different types of strategic behaviour will be important for different states, but the policy areas below are important for most states.

1. Nuclear strategy

What are the characteristics of the country's attitudes towards nuclear war, nuclear deterrence, limited war and escalation, strategic defence and nuclear blackmail and coercion? Comments on 'nuclear strategy', even for countries which do not have nuclear weapons themselves, would be useful: all countries are targetable. How are nuclear weapons themselves viewed: as military weapons, or as political bargaining counters? What is distinctive about the country's nuclear beliefs, and what has it in common with other states? Does the country's policy on nuclear weapons accord with these beliefs? Is there evidence of divergence between beliefs and policy? Is policy adopted although it does not fit in with beliefs and values? Or is policy in line with beliefs and values? If so, is there evidence that those beliefs played a part in determining policy?

2. Conventional strategy

Is there anything distinctive about the country's attitudes policies towards conventional military strategy? What are the main characteristics of beliefs about the use of conventional forces? What objectives would be served by it? Are offensive or defensive strategies believed best? Is there emphasis on deception and manoeuvre, or on seeking decisive battles? Are short wars preferred, or long, attritional conflicts? Are land, sea or air forces favoured? Is intervention believed to be acceptable? Is there any belief in non-offensive defence? Where, how and why has force been used in the recent past? What are the main characteristics of the doctrine of the armed forces? Does the use of force - or threat to use it - contradict strategic cultural beliefs? Do other factors seem to have caused the state to 'go against its grain'? Or has it been in accord with traditional beliefs? To what extent can conventional strategic policy and doctrine be said to have been determined by strategic culture?

3. Disarmament and arms control

What have been the country's views on the major questions of disarmament and arms control? Has there been a 'peace movement' pressing for disarmament? Have arms control or disarmament been taken seriously as means to security? Has the country taken any initiatives? Is the government content to follow others on these matters? Has any serious thought gone into confidence-building measures or other aspects of arms control? Have any agreements been reached, and have they been honoured?

4. Unconventional strategy

Does the country have any distinctive attitudes with respect to revolutionary strategies, guerrilla war, or terrorism, or to countering them? Are these methods regarded as

dishonourable or honourable, or justifiable? Should they be waged in any particular ways? Has the country been involved either in waging or in combating unconventional warfare? Has its policy and strategy been in line with beliefs and values? Has it been significantly determined by them, or otherwise?

5. Independence/Interdependence

Does the country believe it can best look after its security interests on its own? What is its attitude to associates and alliances? Has there been any thinking about 'common security', 'security communities', 'security regimes' or 'collective security'? Is the future seen in a unilateral or multilateral framework? Has policy sought to provide independence, or to link the country's security to that of others? Has this been because of the country's attitudes, or because no alternative can be seen - in an increasingly interdependent world, has independence become an unattainable goal? Or is interdependence in security genuinely desired?

6. Approaches to security

How is security approached - in a narrow military sense or in a broader sense, as in 'comprehensive security'? What place in security policy is accorded to political, social, economic or environmental security?

(D) *Culture and behaviour*

Having identified the key features of the group's strategic culture, its impact on debate and behaviour needs to be tackled. How far is it possible to use strategic culture as a tool for explaining specific decisions? To answer this question a case study approach could be employed, looking at important decisions on issues such as whether or not to acquire nuclear weapons, to join in alliances or security organisations. The importance of strategic

culture may well vary from case to case, but through various case studies its role could be assessed. In various ways the influence of strategic culture may be looked for. First, does it play a part in the determination of which options should be placed on, and which left off, the agenda for consideration? Does it set preferences among these options, making some more and some less attractive? Second, what role has strategic culture in determining which option is finally selected? How far are beliefs and values translated into decisions? And how important are other explanatory factors?

Next, does strategic culture have an instrumental role? Does it affect how arguments are framed? Is there a language in which proposals must be rendered for them to be considered legitimate? Do appeals have to be made to beliefs and values for proposals to be considered? Do options have to be tailored so as to fit in with existing beliefs? Whether or not strategic culture affects policy and decisions, and is useful in explaining such, it may well be of use in understanding the debates which take place. Why are some issues subject to fierce debate, why are some considered non-controversial? Where does the burden of proof lie in particular debates? How are cases best presented? Which analogies are used often, which historical events and people are brought in to support arguments? What meaning is attached to these people and events? Those seeking to understand strategic debate will need to know about the nation's past, its traditions, its practices, its symbols, its meanings. Empirical analysis of individual case studies will show whether comprehension of the strategic culture is necessary fully to grasp the meaning of debate.

Here it is important also to ask about the decision-making apparatus of the state. How debates are conducted and decisions made will also be affected by the institutions involved, and their own specific cultures. Is it possible to identify decision-making styles, traditional patterns of decision-making which carry on in modern times? Are there coalitions of departments or interest groups which share beliefs? Obviously it is important to ask who has power within the decision-making structure, and what interests different

groups have, but they may also have distinctive beliefs and values. And why certain ministries have more say in decisions may be rooted in historical approaches to defence and security: the 'senior' service, if there is one, may retain influence due to its glorious history, old regiments may be impossible to cut for sentimental reasons. Can 'cultural' reasons be found for the relative influence of different services, or treasuries, foreign offices, defence ministries? For the importance accorded to public opinion?

Conclusion

The political culture literature offers some additional theoretical shine to the concept of strategic culture. However, it also reveals that key issues in strategic culture exist also within political culture and have no widely accepted solution. The relationship of culture and structure, and the methods by which culture may be studied, for instance, are complicated and contentious. Therefore a number of questions about the utility of cultural analysis remain open. In the case study chapters, some answers to these questions will be offered.

The framework for analysis offers a starting point for further analysis. It is a comprehensive approach to the subject. Not all of its parts will be relevant for a particular group. In the Chapter Five, an analysis is attempted of traditional British strategic culture, drawing on those aspects of the framework which seem to be most relevant. The aim is to produce a profile of British strategic culture which captures as far as possible the essence of a British approach, before Chapter Six examines some key strategic decisions in the immediate post-war period to see if they are more easily comprehensible in the light of the profile of British strategic culture.

Chapter Five: British Strategic Culture in Profile

Introduction

The previous chapters have discussed the development of approaches to strategic culture and located them within the literature of strategic studies. The related approach of political culture has been examined and ideas that can aid the further development of strategic culture have been borrowed from it. A way forward with the study of strategic culture was then suggested and a framework proposed through which to study the strategic culture of any particular group. Turning now to the case study sections of the thesis, the attempt is made to test the utility of strategic culture, as it has been defined above, in a systematic fashion. The aim will be to provide a general understanding of British strategic culture which will enhance our understanding of British strategy and defence policy in the 1945-52 period. It is also hoped that focusing in depth on the case study will demonstrate the usefulness of the research framework in particular and strategic culture in general.

The reasons for studying Britain during this period are, first, that 1945 saw the end of World War Two and the start of the nuclear age, two events of enormous significance in British strategic history. Times of great change in external circumstances are useful in searching for the operation of strategic culture. Old attitudes may be raised to a more conscious level and discussed more openly as they are shown to be outdated. On the other hand, it may be that existing attitudes continue to hold and that new developments are interpreted in their light, leading to distinctive national solutions, perhaps inappropriate ones, to new problems. It has been argued that the foundations of

post-war British strategy, especially nuclear, were laid in the early post-war period.[1] An especially significant landmark occurred in 1952 with the preparation by the British Chiefs of Staff of their famous report on Defence Policy and Global Strategy. The Global Strategy Paper, as it is usually known, has variously been described as a 'classic among military documents' and one of the 'most significant' government defence papers of the post-war era.[2] Churchill himself called it a 'state paper of the greatest importance'.[3] Its claimed significance lay in its having 'set out the bases of British strategic ideas in the nuclear age'.[4] 1952 therefore marks the end of an important passage of British strategic planning. It is worth investigating whether strategic culture helped shape British grand strategy during this time of change and uncertainty.

This period has also yet to be subjected to a systematic, explicit strategic culture examination. Some analyses implicitly adopt similar approaches, but none has done so explicitly.[5] We can therefore compare an account of the period derived from this approach with others applying different perspectives. A more practical reason for studying this period is that considerable documentary evidence now exists covering this period. Under the thirty year rule governing the release of official papers, records from the period have gradually been made public, though much documentation of interest was kept classified. Recent loosening of secrecy rules as part of the Waldegrave Initiative on Open Government has, however, allowed even more material into the public realm, notably including the 1952 Global Strategy Paper itself, as well as its 1950 equivalent.[6] These

[1] See John Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy 1945-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p. 1.
[2] See Andrew J. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics: The British Experience with an Independent Strategic Force 1939-1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 87; and Eric J. Grove, *Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy Since World War Two* (London: Bodley Head, 1987), p. 83.
[3] Cited in Richard N. Rosecrance, *Defence of the Realm: British Strategy in the Nuclear Epoch* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 164.
[4] Ian Clark and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The British Origins of Nuclear Strategy 1945-1955* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p. 170.
[5] For example, Clark and Wheeler, pp. 17-42, discuss Britain's strategic legacy, or the historical baggage account of which decision-makers had to take.
[6] For a detailed discussion of the 1952 Global Strategy Paper, see John Baylis and Alan Macmillan, 'The British Global Strategy Paper of 1952', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (June 1993), pp. 200-26. A full version of the paper is contained in Alan Macmillan and John Baylis, *A Reassessment of the British Global Strategy Paper of 1952*, International Politics Research Paper No. 13 (Department of

documents can be analysed with a view to deriving from them evidence of the beliefs and values which might have informed debate and decisions on strategic policy. British grand strategy during the early post-war years therefore represents a convenient, interesting and manageable case study.

A number of authors have already made use of the newly available documentation to construct detailed histories of British strategy during the early post-war period.[7] Their work contrasts with previous studies based on interview and other secondary sources (excepting the work of Margaret Gowing, the official historian of the British atomic energy commission, who had full access to government papers).[8] Whereas the earlier work focused on the political rationales for British acquisition of atomic weapons, such as their importance for the maintenance of British great power status and the so-called 'Anglo-American special relationship', the later work has concentrated more attention on the strategic side. It has sought to show, using the newly available documents, that much debate went on within the government around the role and utility of atomic weapons.[9] It is perhaps inevitable that scholars digging into the archives will find much new evidence of strategic debate, for once decisions have been made to develop nuclear weapons, the armed forces must discuss their utility. How significant their discussions are in the decision to acquire the weapons is another matter.

International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, in association with the Nuclear History Program, 1993). The 1950 Global Strategy Paper, DO (50) 45, Report by the Chiefs of Staff on 'Defence Policy and Global Strategy', 7 June 1950, was published in H.J. Yasamee and K.A. Hamilton, (eds), *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, Series II, Vol. IV, *Korea: June 1950-April 1951* (London: HMSO, 1991), pp. 411-31.

[7] In addition to Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, and Clark and Wheeler, see for instance Ian Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy and the Special Relationship: Britain's Deterrent and America, 1957-1962* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Martin S. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning 1955-1958* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); and G. Wyn Rees, *Anglo-American Approaches to Alliance Security, 1955-60* (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with the Mountbatten Centre for International Studies, University of Southampton, 1996).

[8] Margaret Gowing's official history is *Independence and Deterrence: Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945-1952* Vol. I, *Policy Making* (London: Macmillan, 1974). Other earlier works include Pierre; Rosecrance; and A.J.R. Groom, *British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons* (London: Pinter, 1974). On the two waves of writing, see Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, pp. 1-3.

[9] See Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, pp. 1-3.

It may also be the case that the recent works are by younger academics, such as Clark and Wheeler, from a new generation which is more resigned to Britain being a power of the second rank, and who therefore are less convinced that Great Power status was so significant. In other words, it may be that older scholars like Gowing were part of the strategic culture of the time. Their analysis could then have used knowledge of prevailing beliefs and values to fill in the gaps left by missing documents, thereby employing a strategic culture approach in spirit if not in name. Part of the point of this case study section is then be to see whether a strategic culture approach yields an explanation closer to one or other view of British grand strategy.

There are other reasons also why the strategic culture approach might differ from recent scholarship. That scholarship is grounded in the assumption that with more documents now available, the story of the development of British nuclear strategy can more completely be told and the key decisions better understood. Certainly the documents shed new light on a number of areas of British strategy. However, there are two respects in which a strategic culture approach might come to different conclusions. First, strategic culture is concerned with shared values and beliefs, which are often held implicitly or taken for granted. It is concerned with things which go without saying. These 'unspoken assumptions' are not always written down, because there is no need to do so.[10] The documents do not always yield evidence of important beliefs, and only give a partial account of the past. Even if all the documents of the period were available, they would not tell us everything. Strategic culture attempts to fill in the blanks in the thinking of decision-makers by suggesting which beliefs and values underscored decisions.

Secondly, for some historians, the job of writing history is to let the facts, as contained in the documents, 'speak for themselves'.[11] Others believe that this is an

[10] For a discussion of the need for historians to comprehend the 'unspoken assumptions' of decision-makers, see James Joll, '1914: The Unspoken Assumptions', in H.W. Koch, (ed), *The Origins of the First World War: Great Power Rivalry and German War Aims* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 309-12.

[11] See E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, second edition, edited by R.W.Davies, 1987), p. 11.

impossible task and that documents on their own have no meaning.[12] In order to understand the debates revealed in the documents you need to comprehend the prism of beliefs and values through which decision-makers see the world. Only then can the meaning of the documents be more fully revealed. Strategic culture tries to provide the means for interpreting the documents. This interpretive approach therefore has the potential to provide an understanding of the period lacking in documentary histories which are concerned only implicitly with beliefs and values, or not at all.

The aim of the case study chapters is therefore to use the framework to analyse British grand strategy between 1945-52 to see whether a new understanding can be forged of the period, and to see where it differs from and agrees with existing studies. The first stage in the application of the framework involves attempting to identify the main features of British strategic culture prior to 1945, its key distinctive beliefs and values, and establishing their enduring nature over a long period of time. If it cannot be shown that distinctive British strategic beliefs have existed over time, then one of the main planks of the strategic culture approach can be dismissed. The attempt will also be made to link these beliefs to the geographic situation, historical experience and political culture of the nation. That it is national specifity that shapes distinctive strategic belief is also an important plank of the strategic culture approach.

To isolate what is distinctive in the British strategic culture, a comparative approach involving a number of different states would be no doubt be preferable. To study only one state is to risk identifying as unique to one culture beliefs which are to be found more widely. Indeed, it is argued that British history is 'commonly taught separately and with very little cross reference to that of the rest of Europe', ignoring the developments shared by Britain and its European neighbours.[13] That this is so stems from

[12] For a provocative recent discussion of these issues see Keith Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).
[13] See Jeremy Black, *Convergence or Divergence? Britain and the Continent* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 1-2.

a perception of Britain as unique. This then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, for if Britain alone is considered then comparisons with other countries go unseen. Therefore the risk arises that by pre-supposing a unique British way in war and studying only Britain to find it, we confirm tautologically our original belief. Comparative studies, and the more the better, would lessen this risk. Yet, as the size of the framework shows, there is little research economy in the study of strategic culture. It requires considerable effort, and space does not allow for additional case studies. Moreover, comparative studies are not without considerable difficulties themselves. Given the diversity of countries, finding rough equivalents is not easy. Where possible, comparison and contrast will be made, however, with other countries, and especially those which have already been the subject of strategic culture studies. This is not an entirely satisfactory approach. Nevertheless, as a first stage it is necessary to discern whether enduring strategic beliefs exist. Further comparative studies in the future can confirm - or deny - their uniqueness.

What follows is a first attempt at isolating the beliefs central to British strategic culture. The aim is to provide a comprehensive survey, though there will be aspects of British strategic thinking and experience which will not be covered. To aim for breadth is, to some degree, to sacrifice depth. More could be said than there is space for here. Nevertheless, the intention is to cover as much ground as possible. With regard to sources from which to infer beliefs, the approach is eclectic. As a product in part of that culture, the author's own insights will be one source. The areas picked out as important sources of strategic culture in previous chapters were geography and resources, historical experience, and political organisation and culture, especially with regard to the machinery of defence policy making. These can now be considered, though as noted in the previous chapter it is the interaction of all these factors which is crucial: it is hard to separate them out.

Framework for Analysis

1. Geography and resources

A couple of preliminary points need to be made. First, the implications of the geography of a state and its natural resources vary over time. The military importance of coal as a resource, for instance, has waxed and waned over the past couple of centuries as warships moved from sail to coal and then oil fired engines. In the mid-1990s, with the Channel Tunnel built, it is possible to travel by train from London to Paris or Brussels in less time than to Glasgow or Aberystwyth, so that for many people in Britain a day trip 'abroad' may become much less remarkable than when it entailed flying or sailing. Technology therefore can affect the implications of geography. It is necessary to regard geography, resources and technology not as fixed entities, but as subject to change.

The second point is that geography and resources necessarily determine little. People can interpret the implications of geographical position in different ways. So the Atlantic Ocean is often characterised in post-war Britain as 'the pond', across which we might hop to the United States, whereas the English Channel, notwithstanding the Chunnel, is still seen by some as a moat or barrier. Attitudes as opposed to geographical 'facts' lead a 3000 mile stretch of water to be regarded by some as less of a barrier than a channel little more than twenty miles across at its narrowest point. Contemporary debates on British involvement in the European Union show this ambivalence. Some see Britain as essentially European, some as quite separate from Europe. The position of Britain, an island moored close to continental Europe, could support either view. It is important, in short, to avoid the determinism which has in the past characterised geopolitical analysis which, it is argued, has led to states rationalising expansionist policies on the grounds of the dictates of geography.[14] (It might be added that beliefs about geopolitics could constitute an important part of a group's strategic culture.)

[14] See for instance G.R. Sloan, *Geopolitics in United States Strategic Policy, 1890-1987* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1988), p. 234.

The point of this section, therefore, is not to point to unchanging geographical features as determining beliefs or behaviour. However, a state's geographic setting and features clearly open up some possibilities and close off others. Britain, as an island not far from continental Europe, has had opportunities both to involve itself in the affairs of, and to distance itself from, other European countries. The Channel could serve either as a moat or as a highway. Similarly, British people could take to the seas to develop links with other areas and continents overseas, or opt for isolation. Changes in transport technology, with faster ships and the development of air power, obviously affected Britain's position, making contact with other areas easier, though this could produce both new risks and opportunities.

With regard to resources, as an island relatively poor in raw materials, Britain has had an incentive to develop commercial links with other areas of the globe. Indeed, Britain has imported much of its food.[15] Another important aspect of British resources concerns industry. During the period under consideration the Industrial Revolution took place in Britain and other European states, though at different paces in different states. The changing absolute and relative significance of British industrial strength will be considered under history and experience.

2. History and experience

Two major problems emerge when considering the enormous subject of the history and experience of a nation with a view to tracing the development of strategic culture beliefs. First, where to start? In his work on Chinese strategic culture, Alastair Johnston goes back to the eleventh century and earlier, indeed as far back as 500BC, to inspect classic military texts which he argues form the core of Chinese strategic thought.[16] Writing about

[15] Philip Norton, *The British Polity* (New York and London: Longman, third edition, 1994), p. 7.
[16] Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 40.

Soviet strategic culture, Yitzhak Klein begins with the revolution in 1917, ignoring Russian history before that date.[17]

Where to start will vary from culture to culture. In the case of Britain, it would be possible to delve deep into history, to the history of England over many centuries. Some reference may be made to earlier times, but the focus here will be on the modern period, from the start of the eighteenth century. In 1707 the union between Scotland and Wales and England took place, creating in essence the modern British state, and during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries British national identity was forged.[18] Britain also rose to great power status during this time in the modern state system. More emphasis will be given also to more recent events, which generally are fresher in people's minds and more influential upon them. British history, then, begins with the formation of Britain. Writing the history of Britain also serves no doubt to confirm the existence of Britain as an entity or community, as a common past links people together.

A second problem is to select within this period what is relevant to study. It is not possible to inspect government documents over the whole period, nor obviously to conduct interviews. To consider such a long historical period we are forced to use secondary works of history. Of these there are plenty, for history itself is taken seriously in British culture.[19] The past is generally regarded as glorious, and a source of pride, unlike in Germany, for example, where recent history is a source of shame and guilt.[20] Some writers see this as nostalgia, as Britons living in the past rather than trying to understand it and draw lessons from it for the future. In any case, much has been written about British history. The historians who have done the writing have selected what they believe to be important and omitted what they see as irrelevant. In doing so they reflect

[17] Ira J. Klein, *Soviet Strategic Culture, 1917-1965* (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1988); and Yitzhak Klein, Sources of Soviet Strategic Culture', *The Journal of Soviet Military Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (December 1989), pp. 453-90. (Yitzhak and Ira Klein are the same person).
[18] For an excellent recent study of this period, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1992).
[19] See the 'Introduction' to Roy Porter, (ed), *Myths of the English* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), p. 2.
[20] See Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt* (London: Cape, 1994).

contemporary concerns. Yet these historians will very often be part of British culture, and moreover of its elite. Their works provide the basis of the modern elite's understanding of the past. For that reason they are of interest, for our concern is not with history as an objective entity, but with how certain events and actors are perceived and which are entered onto the historical record.

What is of interest therefore is which events remain, partly through the writing of historical accounts, in the collective consciousness, and which are allowed to fade. If national history can be likened to personal memory, which has been described as selective amnesia, we are interested in what is remembered clearly, but also what is forgotten or repressed. Indeed, events which are forgotten may well be more significant in what they tell us about beliefs and attitudes than remembered events. If some episode in history is painful because it challenges the way Britons think of themselves, for instance, it may be repressed. What is painful may change over time. As the idea of empire becomes unacceptable, some aspects of British imperial history may be forgotten. As generations change also, they may look to the past for clues to their identity, choosing to search different periods of their history from those previous generations have selected. Of course, events which are repressed or ignored are more difficult to study, as they may receive little attention in the historical literature. Nevertheless, the attempt will be made to examine aspects of British history about which less is said as well as those about which much is said.

A third issue which follows from this is that our interest is with the perception of events rather than the actuality. This suggests that an important focus of study is on myths - representations of the past which although they may be based on real events are distortions of the past, not rooted in fact. Myths are ways in which people simplify the past in order to understand it or to give meaning to it. Contemporary beliefs may influence the creation of myths or the 'invention' of traditions which bring the past into

line with the present.[21] Myths can also have the function of sustaining traditional values. In interpreting society and understanding its beliefs and values, the study of myths may be as important, indeed more so, than the actual events of history. Historians are often uninterested in myths, for these cannot be studied through documents and records. To the extent that they are interested in myths, they often counterpose them to reality, and seek to 'explode' myths, to expose them as historical untruths by uncovering what 'really' occurred.[22] Strategic culture on the other hand therefore must pay attention to myth, as it is interested mainly in what people believe to be true. Academic debates may rage over whether or not Field Marshal Douglas Haig and other World War One military leaders were incompetent fools or victims of circumstances they could do little to influence, but they are often popularly seen as the former.[23]

Moreover, myths can often exert an extremely powerful hold on people's minds, if they appear to make sense of the past or the present. They have the functions often of legitimising values or institutions, of sanctifying them, of establishing cohesion and maintaining loyalty. All of this underlines their importance. Related to myths in this regard, fulfilling similar functions, are symbols, which can include language, rituals, traditions and customs. Some of these will be referred also to during this chapter.

Our interest therefore is in myth as much as reality. In the post-modern age, however, there is widespread suspicion of all narratives. Various recent books have set about exposing how much of what passes for historical reality is merely myth. Further than that, some post-modern historians argue that all historical accounts are 'ideological constructs', mere representations of the past.[24] Different historians will construct their

[21] On the invention of traditions, see Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Canto edition, 1992; first published by Cambridge University Press, 1983), who define (p. 1) an invented tradition as 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past'.
[22] Porter, p. 2.
[23] A recent contribution to the academic debate is Gerald DeGroot, 'He had hatred thrust upon him', *Times Higher*, 26 July 1996, p. 18.
[24] See Jenkins, p. 17.

historical narratives differently, with different purposes and emphases. No construction, in this view, is more or less accurate than any other, and myths are just other constructions. The dichotomy of myth and reality is therefore questioned by those who ask whether they can ever be distinguished from one another. Notions of reality, and of 'exact historical knowledge', are questioned, and ultimately those who believe in these things are seen as operating on the basis of rationalistic realism: a myth of our Western culture.

In examining British history and experience, therefore, it can be argued that we are looking not at some objective series of events but at cultural constructions of what is important about the past. We are looking at how ideas about the past, whether true or false, have been constructed and developed over time, at which ideas have an enduring existence.[25] How 'true' these constructions are matters less at one level than how widely held and persuasive they are. However, where the 'facts', or what are considered authoritative historical accounts, differ substantially from popular beliefs, will be significant areas, showing perhaps some need on the part of elites and/or populations to avoid the 'truth' or construct different versions of events more in line with existing beliefs or needs. During wartime, for example, myths may be generated, deliberately or otherwise. These are mythogenetic times, for social cohesion and morale need to be sustained.

Experience of war

Britain's island status has conferred upon it the privilege of relative invulnerability to attack. Few other states can claim that they were last successfully invaded as long ago as 1066 (excepting the occupation during World War Two of the Channel Islands, which is often forgotten. Perhaps this is simply because they are not part of mainland Britain, and not seen as an important part of the United Kingdom: perhaps also it does not fit in with

[25] For more detail on 'constructivism', see Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: the social construction of power politics', *International Organisation*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 391-425.

the account of British history which stresses Britain's invulnerability to invasion over many centuries). The security provided by the moat of the English Channel has allowed Britain to defend itself largely through the strength of the Royal Navy. Large standing land armies, and conscription, have not been necessary to defend the British Isles themselves, for much of the history of the British state. Nor have extensive land fortifications been required. The nation's protectors have been inconspicuous, often at sea, and based in harbour towns.

When Britain has been involved in wars, they have generally been abroad, on someone else's territory. The last battle to be fought on English soil was in 1715, according to one source.[26] This is partly a matter of semantics, for skirmishes have taken place since, and of course Britain was shelled from sea and bombed from the air during this century. Nevertheless, Britain has most often been some distance from actual hostilities. It has not suffered, until this century, the damage to land and civilians which other European countries have, and it has not witnessed at first hand the reality of fighting. Even though subjected to air attack in World War Two, Britain still did not suffer anything like the civilian losses and damage of the Soviet Union or other European combatants on both the 'winning' and 'losing' 'sides'.

Britain has, however, been involved in many wars over the past three centuries. By one count, between 1688 and 1945 Britain waged twelve wars with other great powers.[27] This is reflected in the teaching of British history, international history and indeed international relations more generally. These subjects have often been conceived as dealing largely with war: the lead up to it, its conduct, and its consequences.[28] The

[26] Oliver Gillie, 'New Register of English battlefields aims to set record straight', *The Independent*, 7 September 1994.
[27] David French, *The British Way in Warfare 1688-2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. *xii*.
[28] On this point see Ken Booth, '75 Years On: rewriting the subject's past - reinventing its future', in Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski, (eds), *International Theory: positivism and beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 329-30. A recent work on international history which illustrates the point is Michael Dockrill and Brian McKercher, (eds), *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy, 1890-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

twentieth century is divided in our thinking into the pre-war, inter-war and post-war or Cold War periods, plus the wars themselves. This emphasis on war reflects its importance and frequency in British history, though it also perhaps reflects a judgement about the importance of war made by the men who have written history. War has been a fact of life for much of British history, however. In common with other states, people in Britain have seen war as a normal or inevitable state of affairs.[29] The stress accorded to war in works of history may well serve to reinforce this perception.

Britain's wars have been fought on the continent of Europe and further afield where the overseas colonies of European states were fought over. The Royal Navy has also had the role of preventing invading forces from reaching Britain and maintaining its sea links with overseas colonies and trading partners on which Britain depended for its survival. The significance of the Royal Navy's role is symbolised in *Rule Britannia*. The flip side of island security is being cut off from others, and Britain, lacking essential raw materials, has had to maintain foreign contact. When involved in continental wars Britain has needed allies to supply land forces, sometimes paying mercenaries to do the fighting on its behalf.

Britain's experience of war has then been distinct from other Europeans. Wars have happened frequently but usually elsewhere, British casualties have been relatively low, the armed forces have been small and remote. Britain has generally emerged on the winning side but loss has not meant great damage to the homeland itself. Britain has considerable experience of war but not, relatively speaking, much terrible experience. This ended in the First World War, when Britain committed large numbers of troops to the continent. The security of the British homeland was threatened by sea attack to some extent, though invasion was not a fear. On the continent of Europe, however, Britain, like other states, suffered huge, unprecedented losses, and by 1916 was sending conscripts to

[29] On this point see John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, paperback edition, 1990), especially p. 46.

the front. No longer was a professional army taking the brunt of the fighting, but the nation itself. Also, a people shielded from the worst effects of war in the past got more insight into the horrors, if only later from returning soldiers and from war poetry. The impact was substantial, with a reaction against war itself which led, amongst other things, to the establishment of the academic study of international politics (at Aberystwyth), and of the League of Nations, both concerned heavily with the prevention of war. There was a reaction also against the generals, characterised, or caricatured, as 'donkeys' sending men pointlessly to their deaths.[30] There is an ambiguity here, with war itself on the one hand seen as the problem, but on the other, the way the war was conducted to blame for the suffering.

The Second World War is perceived differently, as a war conducted far more competently by military leaders. British losses were far lower, and Britain won victories in a way that was not true of the First War. The Somme and other 'battles' of World War One involving British forces are rarely thought of as victories, whereas histories of decisive battles of the Second World War - much more numerous than books about decisive battles of the Great War - record many involving Britain: Alamein, the Battle of Britain, the Battle of the Atlantic.[31] Moreover, the enemy here was Hitler and fascism, which had to be defeated if freedom was to be preserved. Indeed, Britain believed it was fighting not only for its own freedom but for that of the world, and for Christian civilisation as a whole. Discoveries of the Holocaust after the war confirmed the necessity of victory. As Churchill expressed it in one of his noted wartime speeches, 'we will not

[30] John Terraine carries out a typically vigorous debunking of what he sees as the myth of British soldiers in World War One as lions led by donkeys. See *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War 1861-1945* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1980), pp. 170-81.

[31] Examples of books of decisive battles which feature the Battles of Britain, the Atlantic and El Alamein include Geoffrey Regan, *The Guinness Book of Decisive Battles* (Enfield: Guinness, 1992), which covers fifty decisive battles from world history, including five from World War Two: the Battles of Alamein, Britain, Sedan, Midway and Stalingrad; Peter Young, (ed*), Decisive Battles of the Second World War: An Anthology* (London Barker, 1967), which includes fourteen battles, among them the Battles of Britain, the Atlantic and El Alamein; as does Noble Frankland and Christopher Dowling, (eds), *Decisive Battles of the 20th Century: land-sea-air* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1976); and so too does Anthony Preston, (ed), *Decisive Battles of Hitler's War* (London: Hamlyn, 1977).

fail mankind'.[32] This was a war worth fighting and sacrificing for, and one better run than the first.

Much of this perception may be based on ethnocentric misunderstanding. That Britain emerged with relatively small losses was due, arguably, to poor judgement on the part of the enemy, as well as to luck. By being pushed off the continent straight away Britain may have been spared a war similar to the 1914-18 conflict, when after a fluid opening, static trench warfare set in. Forced to retreat to the island fortress, and perhaps let off the hook by German failure to press their advantage to the full, Britain then enjoyed a respite. The Battle of Britain was won in part through misjudgements and inadequate resources on the part of the enemy, in part through skill and effective fighting by the British and allied forces.[33] The Battle of the Atlantic, in which the enemy attempted to starve the British of supplies, was a close run thing, with British ingenuity and US aid important contributors to victory.[34] Meanwhile, however, a savage war was being fought on the Eastern Front, resembling at times the worst static warfare of World War One.[35] With the luxury of waiting until 1944 to open the second front, Britain was once again able to secure victory through the sacrifice of others.

Notwithstanding the point that British perceptions about the war may be at odds with the 'reality', those perceptions are important. Much anti-war poetry and literature was produced after World War One, the dominant tone of which, it is argued, was irony: the innocence of British troops shattered by the slaughter of the trenches.[36] Examples are legion. One which refers directly to irony is Frederic Manning's *Grotesque*:

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[32] Quoted in Robert Rhodes James, (ed*), Winston S. Churchill, His Complete Speeches 1897-1963*, Vol. VI, *1935-1942* (New York and London: Chelsea House/Bowker, 1974), p. 6329.
[33] See for instance R.J. Overy, *The Air War 1939-1945* (London: Macmillan, paperback edition, 1987), pp. 31-34.
[34] See Basil H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (London: Pan, 1973), pp. 386-411.
[35] The best account of the war on the eastern front is John Erickson's two volumes *The Road to Stalingrad* (London: Panther, 1985); and *The Road to Berlin* (London: Grafton, 1985).
[36] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), especially chapter one.

These are the damned circles Dante trod,
Terrible in hopelessness,
But even skulls have their humour,
An eyeless and sardonic mockery:
And we,
Sitting with streaming eyes in the acrid smoke,
That murks our foul, damp billet,
Chant bitterly, with raucous voices
As a choir of frogs
In hideous irony, our patriotic songs.[37]

Also mocking the patriotism which enticed men into the trenches is Wilfred Owen's *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, one of the best known poems of World War One, which concludes a description of the effects of a gas attack on British soldiers thus:

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, -
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.[38]

After World War Two, by contrast, much British cinema output recorded the glorious British triumph in the war. *The Cruel Sea* (1953), *The Dam Busters* (1955), *The Colditz Story* (1955), *The Battle of the River Plate* (1956) and *The Battle of Britain* (1969) differ in emphases. Some explore themes - such as the nature of masculine roles - for which the war provides a useful context but which have significance which transcends that context.[39] However, if they highlight the destructiveness and madness of the phenomenon of war, none supposes that World War Two could have been avoided nor that it was mismanaged by the British.

[37] Frederic Manning, *Grotesque*, in Jon Silkin, (ed), *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 179. Though Australian, Manning moved to Britain when 16 and fought with the British army.
[38] Wilfred Owen, *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, in *ibid*, p. 183.
[39] See Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society 1930-1960* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 171-78.

What is striking also about World War Two and British memories is which events linger strongest in the memory. D-Day is remembered, its fiftieth anniversary recently celebrated. But Dunkirk and the Blitz are possibly better known and thought more significant. On the face of it this is odd, since Dunkirk saw the British Army knocked off continental Europe and defeated, even if it lived to fight another day. The Battle of Britain and the Blitz were more obviously triumphs for the British, even if achieved in part through German strategic errors. It is significant, however, that these events occurred when Britain stood alone against Hitler. At Dunkirk, Britain is seen as defying the victorious Hitler who has defeated Britain's European allies. 'In defeat, defiance', Churchill noted.[40] Britain, in dire adversity, thumbed its nose at Hitler. Thus Dunkirk is remembered almost as a victory. The joke goes: 'we didn't win at Dunkirk by running away'.

Many of Churchill's speeches sum up British defiance. The idea that Germany would wring Britain's neck like a chicken was countered famously by Churchill with a speech concluding: 'some chicken, some neck'.[41] Britain would fight them on the beaches and anywhere else. Again, during the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, the image is of plucky Britain taking on the might of Germany and surviving. This time it is 'the Few' who defeat Hitler, yet the Blitz as a whole is remembered as a time when the nation stood together under attack. Upper lips were kept stiff and morale never buckled. The Royal Family rode it out in London. Everyone mucked in and did their bit. Angus Calder might expose this as a myth, but the idea of the nation standing together remains a powerful one.[42] At Dunkirk also, it had been a united effort, with brave civilians in small boats ferrying soldiers to safety.

So the events best remembered from the 1939-45 conflict centre on the united British nation facing the enemy and overcoming it, and doing so alone until eventual,

[40] This phrase is part of the 'Moral of the Work' in Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* (London: Cassell, 1948-1954).
[41] Quoted in Rhodes James, p. 6544.
[42] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1992).

belated US involvement. This war was seen as a worthwhile one to rescue the world from fascism. Also, the nation had a sense of unity and purpose, fighting for a fairer, better Britain, for domestic social reform. War may have been an evil, but a necessary one, out of which good would come.

Some historical events are remembered clearly, others forgotten. Partly this is due to the concerted effort to remember certain events. The two world wars have been seen as events which must never be forgotten if they are not to be repeated. After the great war, considerable effort was devoted to devising ways of commemorating the sacrifice entailed. Village war memorials, remembrance Sunday, Chelsea pensioners and poppies have become well-known symbols commemorating the two world wars in particular (though it has been argued that the French make even greater efforts at commemoration, with VE Day designated a national holiday, and 11 November even now marked by more events than in Britain). The theme of such symbols is that 'we will remember them'. What is remembered is the sacrifice of soldiers in the pursuit of some just end - the defeat of tyranny or the ending of war itself.[43] Other events are not commemorated so deliberately, and indeed allowed to pass out of the collective memory. This is especially so of less glorious historical episodes where the use of force is less justifiable. British colonial policy involved the threat and use of force to maintain control of other peoples and to exploit them commercially. This was justified on the grounds of ideas of white superiority. This is a less celebrated aspect of history in modern times when it seems indefensible; in other times it was a source of glory that Britain maintained an empire on which the sun never set. By the end of the Second World War such attitudes could still be found, and attempts had been made throughout the previous half century to keep the Empire alive. Empire too was bound up with ideas of great power status. But with the huge contribution of Africans and Asians from the Empire to the war for British freedom, it was becoming more difficult to sustain them and to deny freedom to the colonies. Closer to home, British intervention

[43] Bob Bushaway, 'Name Upon Name: The Great War and Remembrance', in Porter.

in Ireland and its consequences are subjects of national amnesia. So history gets written by the victors, with the losers' version omitted, and it gets rewritten as attitudes change.

As a victorious power in the two wars this century, Britain gained little incentive for change. Defeated states like Germany had to ask how they had reached that position; devastated states had to rebuild from scratch. Britain emerged from World War Two able to tell itself that it must have been doing the right things in the realms of foreign and defence policy up till then in order to triumph. At home, social change was forced on to the agenda by wartime experience. In terms of security policy this was not the case. Indeed, however awful the effects of war, it could become later a source of nostalgia in that it was a time of national unity and purpose, when people worked and fought together. This may be a rose-tinted view. In the immediate aftermath of war people were no doubt glad it was over and looking to rebuild and restore prosperity. Later, as the economy struggled and social problems emerged, the war could be seen in a different light.

Strategic Thinking and Doctrine

In looking for traditional British approaches to strategy, an interesting starting place is with the work of Basil Liddell Hart. Probably Britain's best known writer on military affairs, Liddell Hart wrote in 1932 a book on *The British Way in Warfare*.[44] As discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, he argued that over three centuries of successful military experience there had evolved a 'distinctively British practice of war'.[45] The keynotes of this policy were mobility and surprise, which were best achieved through the use of sea power. Britain, developing into an imperial nation, eschewed land battles on continental Europe in favour of the use of the Royal Navy to build an overseas empire. Continental powers were fought by intercepting their shipping and disrupting their trade, not by directly engaging them in land warfare.

[44] Basil H. Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare: Adaptability and Mobility* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1935).
[45] *Ibid*, p. *v*.

In the Great War, however, this traditional practice was abandoned as Britain committed huge forces to the continent and fought an attritional war to very nearly the bitter end. 'Shallow thought' and 'slavish imitation of Continental fashions' were to blame for this action, the result of which was the catastrophic losses of trench warfare. Britain must return, Liddell Hart argued, to its traditional and successful maritime strategy. This view is challenged by other historians, notably Michael Howard.[46] Howard stresses the limitation throughout British history of dependence on sea power alone. Britain's naval strength gave it certain options, such as attacking the colonies and trade of others. It enabled Britain to survive by retreating behind its moat while continental states were overrun, to recoup its strength. But naval power on its own could not bring victory. That required taking on enemy land forces. The British had always recognised this: 'a commitment of support to a Continental ally in the nearest available theatre, on the largest scale that contemporary resources could afford, so far from being alien to traditional British strategy, was absolutely central to it', Howard concludes.[47] Where Britain had relied solely on maritime strength, it was through force of necessity rather than a matter of choice. The events of the two world wars were therefore in line with past practice.

Howard described Liddell Hart's book as 'a piece of brilliant political pamphleteering', a polemic backed by selective reference to history and intended to influence government policy and public opinion.[48] Liddell Hart was typical of his generation, shocked by the unprecedented losses of World War One. If modern historians see change in the nature of warfare itself as largely responsible for the carnage of the trenches, contemporaries tended to blame the errors of political and military leaders. Had Britain adhered to its traditional policy victory could have been achieved at much less cost.

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[46] Michael Howard, 'The British Way in Warfare: A Reappraisal', in Howard, *The Causes of Wars* (London: Unwin, 1984).
[47] *Ibid*, p. 200.
[48] *Ibid*, p. 192.

Howard himself was an advocate of the need for Britain to undertake a continental commitment, for 'no continental adversary could be defeated without a military decision on the mainland of Europe and Britain could wield no influence either in war or in peace unless she was prepared to make a major contribution to that decision'.[49] Howard's influential book, *The Continental Commitment*, came out in 1972. In a new edition which appeared in 1989, Howard reflected that, just as Liddell Hart's generation had been influenced by its experience, so too he had been influenced by events. Liddell Hart, after the Great War, came to believe that continental commitments were contrary to tradition and to be avoided if that war was not to be repeated. Howard, after World War Two, and during the Cold War, sought to show that a commitment to NATO was crucial to prevent a recurrence of war.[50]

Each writer then was influenced by his own experience, but each was also taking part in a long-standing debate, dating back as far as the Elizabethan age. As an island 'separated from, yet part of, the European land mass', Britain had at least the illusion of choice: to enter into European affairs, or to use her sea power to maintain isolation from Europe and links elsewhere.[51] Around this choice a debate or a dialectic emerged, with advocates both of a maritime strategy and a continental commitment. For Walter Raleigh, 'whosoever commands the sea commands trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself'.[52] Sir Francis Knollys meanwhile advised Queen Elizabeth that 'the avoiding of Her Majesty's danger doth consist in the preventing of the conquest of the Low Countries'.[53] Michael Howard believes that this dialectic has been central not only to Britain's strategy but also 'to her

[49] Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The dilemma of British defence policy in the era of the two world wars* (London: The Ashfield Press, new edition, 1989), p. 8.
[50] *Ibid*.
[51] Howard, 'The British Way in Warfare', p. 193.
[52] Quoted in *ibid*, p. 189.
[53] Quoted in *ibid*, p. 193.

political economy and indeed her culture, throughout her historical experience', and indeed remains so today.[54]

The issue here is then less whether a continental commitment or a maritime strategy is in Britain's best interests, nor whether one or the other is traditional. Indeed, the argument of a recent book by historian David French is that no distinctive British way in warfare can be discerned. Britain pragmatically adopted what was seen as the best approach for any given war, in this account, sometimes favouring maritime operations, sometimes land operations.[55] Rather the issue is that debates about British strategy have often been framed in terms of one versus the other. At different times, different experiences may lend greater support to one or the other. But it is the opposition of one to the other which characterises British strategic debate.

It is interesting also that the notion of a distinctive British way in warfare has been current since the beginning of the century when Julian Corbett distinguished the British, maritime strategy from the Continental or German approach.[56] So the idea that there is a distinct British way in war or strategic culture has been self-consciously debated for some time, even if there is disagreement about what constitutes it. That something close to a British strategic culture has been discussed for a hundred years is an interesting part of the strategic culture. Moreover, that it has been used in the advocacy of future policies is noteworthy also: the view that tradition should be maintained, that because a policy is traditional and long adhered to it still holds good. As Howard notes, much British historical writing over the past century makes reference to the Elizabethan age.[57] Finding support for in history for your policies seems to be seen as an important means of advocacy.

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[54] *Ibid*.
[55] French, especially p. 232.
[56] Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1972, first published 1911).
[57] Howard, 'The British Way in Warfare', p. 189.

For much of Britain's strategic history, its island status resulted in relative British invulnerability to attack, and a debate about whether strategic interests could best be advanced through sea power or land forces; through a maritime strategy or a continental commitment. In the early years of the twentieth century, however, the development of a new technology brought new meaning to Britain's geographical setting. Air power threatened to bypass both sea and land forces and to strike at the heart of a state's industry and population. This was a threat to all states, but particularly to one which had hitherto been able to avoid the worst effects of warfare.

The threat of air attack was seen between the wars as a very real and frightening one. It was imagined that the damage done by bombing to people and property, and to morale, would be awesome and on a scale never before faced by Britain. Moreover, little or nothing could be done in the face of this threat, for the bomber would always get through, as Baldwin put it in his famous speech to the House of Commons on 10 November 1932. The fear of the bomber arguably deterred the British from undertaking firmer action against the Axis states in the late 1930s. It seems to have been in Chamberlain's mind when negotiating with Hitler at Munich, for example.[58] Harold Macmillan later commented that 'we thought of air warfare in 1938 rather as people think of nuclear warfare today'.[59]

Bomber aircraft posed new threats to Britain, but simultaneously offered new opportunities. At the same time as being open to bomber attack, of course, Britain could itself bomb others. The Royal Air Force did indeed develop between the wars a strategic bombing policy of its own.[60] There was much debate at the time on how air power should

[58] See Uri Bialer, *The Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics 1932-1939* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980), p. 157.
[59] Harold Macmillan, *Winds of Change 1914-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 574.
[60] See R. J. Overy, 'Air Power and the Origins of Deterrence Theory before 1939', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (March 1992), pp. 73-101; William Scot Robertson, *On a Wing and a Prayer: The Development of RAF Strategic Bombing Doctrine 1919-1939* (PhD Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1989); and Mark Venables, *The Place of Air Power in Post-War British Defence Planning, and its Influence on the Genesis and Development of the Theory of Nuclear Deterrence, 1945-52* (PhD Thesis, King's College London, 1985).

be used. As a new technology allowing military action against the heart of the enemy, and promising, in some accounts, more or less instant and horrific damage in war, various matters had to be faced. Against which targets should attacks be directed - military only, cities, or industry? Should pre-emptive attack be launched, given the damage a state would face in an initial attack? For the British, it was considered wrong to strike a first blow.[61] Was defence against air attack feasible?

After debating such issues, the British had in place by the outbreak of the Second World War a strategic bombing doctrine which was then put into practice. This doctrine involved taking the war directly to the enemy population and industry, its war-making potential. During the war Britain favoured area bombing attacks aimed at destroying enemy morale. Debate continues on the effectiveness of the policy in practice, on its contribution to the end of the conflict. Certainly air power did not have the immediate and devastating effect which many had attributed to it, and the limitations of the technology available affected the policy. Many airmen did nevertheless emerge from World War two convinced that strategic air power could have a decisive impact in war.[62]

Did air power then revolutionise British strategic thinking? Did it require a new debate in place of the continental commitment against the maritime strategy? It has been argued that air power could be fitted in to this debate. As a power traditionally weak in land forces, Britain had placed much reliance on sea power. Now it could rely on air power, both as a defence against attack and as a means of carrying the war to the enemy. Instead of indirect blockade and attacks on enemy colonies aimed at weakening an enemy economically, the British could, through the application of air power, attack enemy industry directly. As Freedman writes, 'it demanded no great conceptual leap to suggest

[61] At the very least, a pretext was needed. See Roger Ruston, *A Say in the End of the World: Morals and British Nuclear Weapons Policy 1941-1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 49-56.
[62] Not the least the important of them was Sir John Slessor, future Chief of the Air Staff. See Slessor, *The Great Deterrent*, pp. 65, 68, 69, 74, 112, 116 128-29 and 143; Slessor, 'The Past Development of Air Power', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Vol. 94, No. 574 (May 1949), pp. 226 and 229; Slessor, *Strategy for the West*, pp. 12 and 101.

that bombers might achieve through direct assault what the Navy could only achieve through an indirect squeeze'.[63] The British preference for targeting civilians rather than industry weakens this case, however.

Three final points are worth making in this section. First, with regard to wider influences on British strategic thinking, it might be asked how influential foreign strategists were, and in particular Clausewitz. Recent scholarship shows how difficult it is to identify the influence of Clausewitz in Britain.[64] For one thing, his influence is often denied. The self-conscious British distaste for theory, discussed below, leads many to rule out the possibility that the philosophical work *On War* could have been read widely in Britain.[65] Indeed, little military theory was produced in Britain, though much military history was, until this century. In the aftermath of the Boer War and then the First World War more attention was paid to this subject, with Liddell Hart and J.F.C. Fuller emerging and writing their numerous books on military theory. Another reason to doubt the influence of Clausewitz was that, as a German as well as a philosopher, he was doubly suspect. Especially at times of competition between Germany and Britain, his 'Teutonic philosophizing' was viewed with disdain.[66] After World War One, Liddell Hart tended to blame Clausewitz for British military failings in the conflict, and Clausewitz was also sometimes seen as encouraging that war and in favour of war in general.[67]

That the British tend to deny Clausewitz's influence is interesting, but does not mean he was uninfluential. If not studied self-consciously, his ideas could still percolate into British thinking where it might be used unwittingly or rationalised as common sense. There is evidence of some writers deliberately adopting Clausewitz. Julian Corbett, for instance, writing on sea power, did more than Mahan to emphasise that land forces were

[63] Lawrence, Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, second edition, 1989), p. 11.
[64] Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America 1815-1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 6.
[65] *Ibid*, p. 4.
[66] *Ibid*, p. 80.
[67] *Ibid*, pp. 114 and 123.

also important, that Britain needed to wage limited, defensive wars on land as well as exercise sea power. In this he drew on Clausewitz.[68] Others who drew on Clausewitz tended to be reformers, using the German's ideas to lend weight to their views.[69]

Looking at other military theorists in the first half of the twentieth century, a similar story emerges of the influence of foreign thinkers being denied. According to Sir John Slessor, a post-war Chief of the Air Staff and close aide of Sir Hugh Trenchard, the 'Father of the RAF', it was Trenchard who inspired British air power theory.[70] Slessor is always at pains to discount the influence which the famous Italian air power theorist Douhet is supposed by some analysts to have exerted on British air power thinking in the interwar period, pointing out that he had himself never read Douhet, nor had the Italian been mentioned while he was at Staff College, and complaining that writers such as Liddell Hart and J.F.C. Fuller hugely exaggerated the influence of the Italian air power proponent.[71] This argument is disputed by Bernard Brodie, who sees the RAF as having been won over by the ideas of Douhet, even though he concedes that it had 'already anticipated his views'.[72] However, there is little direct evidence that Douhet exerted any great influence on the RAF as a whole: various works on British wartime bombing policy devote little space to Douhet, while Robin Higham goes out of his way to deny that Douhet was influential.[73] Though similarities exist between the two sets of ideas, it is

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[68] *Ibid*, pp. 95-97.
[69] *Ibid*, p. 212.
[70] John Slessor, *The Central Blue: Recollections and Reflections* (London: Cassell, 1956), pp. 45-47; and John Slessor, *These Remain: A Personal Anthology, Memories of Flying, Fighting and Field Sports* (London: Michael Joseph, 1969), p. 80.
[71] Slessor, *Strategy for the West* (London: Cassell, 1954), p. 97; *The Great Deterrent* (London: Cassell, 1957), p. 140; *The Central Blue*, p. 41; Liddell Hart Archives, Liddell Hart Papers, Correspondence file with Slessor, Slessor to Liddell Hart, 31 October 1947.
[72] Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 75.
[73] See for instance Arthur Harris, *Bomber Offensive* (London: Greenhill, 1990); Max Hastings, *Bomber Command* (London: Book Club Associates, 1980); H. Montgomery Hyde, *British Air Policy Between the Wars 1918-1939* (London: Heinemann, 1976); Charles Messenger, *'Bomber' Harris and the Strategic Bombing Offensive, 1939-1945* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1984); Dudley Saward, *'Bomber' Harris* (London: Buchan & Enright, 1984); Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany 1939-1945*, Vol. I, *Preparation* (London: HMSO, 1961) - none of which contains more than a fleeting reference to Douhet, if any. Douhet's influence on the RAF is disputed by Robin Higham, *The Military Intellectuals in Britain: 1918-1939* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1966), pp. 257-59. Sir Arthur Harris also denied being influenced by Douhet - see M.J. Armitage and R.A. Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age, 1945-1982: Theory and Practice* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 5.

hard to trace influence, especially when it is denied by those who express dislike for any theory.

The second point regarding strategic thinking concerns technology. It is often said that technology is seen in the United States as a panacea, that a technological quick-fix can solve all problems. In Britain, technology has also been important. Britain has led the way in naval technology, with for example the Dreadnought race, trying to stay ahead of Germany technologically (and quantitatively). Britain also developed armour between the wars and tried to develop the best aircraft. In World War Two, the Maud Committee which met to consider whether the attempt should be made to develop atomic weapons concluded that if such weapons could be constructed, then no great power would wish to be without them.[74] To compete with other great powers, then, and to maintain great power status, Britain had to possess the most up-to-date weapons.[75] At the same time, it was considered necessary for Britain to lead other states quantitatively - under the two power standard, Britain sought naval strength equal to the combined strength of her two nearest rivals. So quantity too was needed, greater strength than other states being necessary for security and maintenance of great power status.

Conduct of foreign policy

For most of the last three centuries, Britain has been a 'Great Power', which a capital 'G' and a capital 'P'. That is to say, in military, naval and economic terms Britain was among the small group of European states which were clearly stronger than all the rest. The defining characteristic of great power status was the ability to use force, or threaten its use, in order to further your own interests; more crudely, to be able to wage war on a massive scale whenever necessary, against any state. Great power status was quite self-consciously held. The great powers endeavoured to maintain the small inner circle of

[74] See Margaret Gowing, *Britain and Atomic Energy 1939-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 78.
[75] A point made by Margaret Gowing in *Independence and Deterrence*, pp. 63 and 184.

great powers, to keep others out and to keep members in. With great power status came both rights and obligations in the international arena; the right to take what you wanted from smaller, weaker states, but also the obligation to protect these other states. The great power, then, was the father of the family, commanding obedience, granting favours, and using force where necessary to maintain order and his own position of authority.[76]

Britain's great power status had been achieved partly through war and colonisation. Weak in raw materials, Britain had acquired colonies, often during wars, which could make good its own deficiencies. The empire provided raw materials which were turned into manufactured goods in Britain and then traded as Britain led Europe into the Industrial Revolution. The wealth which this process generated was necessary to wage war. War, colonisation, economic prosperity and great power status were therefore all closely intertwined. As British economic strength began to decline relative to other European states which began to industrialise later, it became correspondingly more difficult for Britain to retain great power status. This led, Paul Kennedy argues, to the adoption in the mid-nineteenth century, of a policy of appeasement. For Kennedy, appeasement meant not 'cowardly surrender' - the meaning attached to the term during the late 1930s - but the practice of 'settling international...quarrels by admitting and satisfying grievances through rational negotiation and compromise, thereby avoiding the resort to an armed conflict which would be expensive, bloody and possibly very dangerous'. For a state in relative economic decline with world-wide responsibilities, this was a sensible, and even a 'natural' policy.[77]

Although great power status required the ability to wage war, the British were therefore for much of this period seeking to avoid conflict. This was also the case after the Napoleonic Wars, when the great powers, weary of war, formed the Concert of Europe, a 'security regime' under which all states showed restraint, sought co-operation

[76] See F. R. Bridge and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System 1815-1914* (London and New York: Longman, 1980), pp. 1-3.
[77] See Paul Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy 1870-1945* (London: Fontana, 1984), pp. 13-18.

rather than conflict, met regularly to discuss problems and defined their interests in broader and longer terms.[78] The nineteenth century witnessed fewer great power wars than the eighteenth, partly through changed attitudes to war and different conceptions of security. Following World War One also the desire to avoid future wars was strong, though this time the preferred method was to set up a collective security organisation. In this the support of great powers was crucial. These states had to live up to their obligations to protect others through the threat and if necessary the use of force in the League of Nations. So notions of great power status remained, in the twentieth century, but in a changed form. Great powers were to use their strength more for the benefit of the international community as a whole, and aggressive use of force was outlawed. The failure of the great powers to meet their obligations led to the failure of the League. The policy of appeasement prevailed and culminated in Munich, a word with huge emblematic power. Failure to confront Hitler in 1938, and the belief that he might be appeased, led to the fall of Czechoslovakia to Germany. Appeasement became a discredited policy and a pejorative term, and war became inevitable.

Another feature of British foreign policy was the emphasis given to the balance of power. Again, this was based upon viewing states in terms of calculations of their military and economic strength. The British policy was to balance the power of rival states on the continent of Europe. The aim was to prevent any state or alliance from becoming powerful enough to dominate the continent. Britain, the neutral balancer, would side with the weaker coalition to balance the power of the stronger, waging war if necessary to cut stronger powers down to size. More than this, some commentators have noted that the British tended to see themselves as saving Europe from itself. By acting as the balancer, Britain could maintain order and stability and prevent Europe from descending into war and chaos. Britain's role was a special one, and indeed Britain had an obligation to maintain the balance. These views were committed to paper by the Foreign

[78] Security regimes are discussed in two important articles by Robert Jervis: 'From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation', *World Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (October 1985), pp. 58-79; and 'Security Regimes', *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Spring 1982), pp. 357-78.

Office mandarin Sir Eyre Crowe in his famous 'Memorandum on the present state of relations with France and Germany', written in January 1907 and described by Zara Steiner as 'perhaps the only Foreign Office memorandum to have become a classic state paper'.[79]

Such a policy required that Britain had no fixed allies, but was free to put its weight behind the weaker states. Continental allies of some kind were essential, however, to the conduct British foreign policy. A debate in British foreign policy which echoes that of the continental commitment versus the maritime strategy can be found here. As an island, it was argued by some that Britain did not need allies, for it could retreat from involvement in the continent. During the last years of the nineteenth century, when Britain lacked allies, some proposed that this was no problem but in fact traditional British policy. Isolation came to be described as 'splendid' at that time, regarded as a source of strength and glory. Other commentators saw allies as necessary throughout British history, however, if not permanent allies.[80] Whatever the 'reality' of British history, it is significant that the debate was conducted in terms of isolation or allies, and not a mixed picture. Following World War One, views changed somewhat, with allies seen as likely to drag you into conflict you had every reason to avoid, and so fixed alliances were avoided.[81] With the Second World War underway, further change occurred: allies were crucial to Britain in war, and the Grand Alliance formed.

[79] See Erik Goldstein, 'The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for the Locarno Pact, 1924-25', in Dockrill and McKercher, pp. 118-19 and 128. The Crowe memorandum is reproduced in G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, (eds), *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*, Vol. III, *The Testing of France 1904-1906* (London: HMSO, 1928), pp. 397-420.
[80] For a full discussion see Christopher Howard, *Splendid Isolation* (London: Macmillan, 1967).
[81] See Lawrence Freedman, 'Alliance and the British Way in Warfare', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (April 1995), pp. 145-47.

3. Political culture and defence organisation

Many writers of text-books on British politics include a discussion of political culture, or the legacy of the past, Britain's political heritage, or some such formulation.[82] There does seem to be a belief then that the past development of British politics is important in explaining current events. This belief that tradition and the past are important for understanding contemporary politics may itself be an important part of the political culture.

The factor most often singled out by writers on British political history is the continuity between past and present. Partly as a consequence perhaps of its isolated and insulated island status, Britain has experienced few sharp breaks with the past over the last three hundred years or so. If the modern British state was formed in 1707 with the political Union between Scotland and Wales and England, since then there have been no revolutions or major political upheavals, as is the case with other European countries. Henry VIII had secularised England in the sixteenth century. During the seventeenth century there was civil war in England. Charles I was beheaded in 1649, but with the Restoration in 1660 Britain returned to the past, reinstalling the monarchy. In 1688 the Glorious Revolution bloodlessly dealt with the relationship of crown and parliament. That relationship has been changed gradually ever since. Three centuries later, the monarchy remains in place, symbolising continuity with the past even if stripped of power. So by 1707 relations between crown, parliament, and the church had been sorted out.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries parliament was reformed, with the franchise extended to more men and eventually to women also. The party system was established and an effective, neutral civil service bureaucracy put in place. Change of huge significance has occurred, but it has done so gradually, by evolution not revolution.

[82] For example, see P.J. Madgwick, *Introduction to British Politics* (London: Hutchinson, second edition, 1976); Norton; and Richard Rose, (ed), *Studies in British Politics: A Reader in Political Sociology* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

That the main institutions of government have survived fosters a sense of continuity, and can disguise the extent to which their functions have altered.

One of the main consequences of Britain's unbroken past is that it has no written constitution, which sets it apart from most other European states. Other countries where revolutions have taken place have had to start from scratch to design a political system in line with new ideals. In Britain change has occurred within the existing set-up. There has been no urgent need to set down in writing how the system should operate. The constitution is a mix of statutes and conventions set by precedent. Many important aspects of the system, such as cabinet government and party organisation, developed gradually out of practice over time rather than by conscious design. There is a flexibility about the British constitution, which can be altered simply by the setting of new precedent or by act of parliament. Whereas in many countries special voting procedures are required for constitutional change, in Britain this is not so. Parliament is sovereign, and change is relatively easy. The flexibility of the constitution also means that it can more simply be circumvented.

This means that the British rely on restraint on the part of politicians to protect their rights, rather than firm constitutional safeguards. Current pressure, represented by Charter 88, for constitutional reform suggests that many people are increasingly ill-at-ease with this situation. One need only mention the Scott Report into Arms to Iraq and the Nolan Committee on Public Standards to highlight recent fears that politicians are not to be trusted.[83] However, political culture studies from the 1960s identified attitudes among the population of deference and allegiance which support the system.[84] People have generally accepted that politicians are trustworthy and believed that the system serves their interests.

[83] On this point see Andrew Marr, *Ruling Britannia: The Failure and Future of British Democracy* (London: Michael Joseph, 1995).
[84] In particular, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 455.

The conclusion drawn by many writers from examining British political history is that continuity and tradition are valued characteristics. Sudden dramatic change is to be avoided, gradual reform preferred. Appeals to tradition and the past, to well-practised ways of doing things, are popular. Old institutions should be adapted to meet new circumstances and demands. Moreover, blue-prints, theories and written agreements are less popular than conventions, understandings and gentleman's agreements. The former are seen as inflexible. Better to proceed empirically and gradually, to be guided by common sense rather than grand theory. The British approach to politics is therefore characterised often as one of pragmatism and muddling through.

Does this make Britain distinctive? Some writers on decision-making theory argue that all governments tend to proceed by a process of 'disjointed incrementalism', taking small decisions which deviate only slightly from past practice rather than generating fresh policy with reference to overall strategic goals. All governments, in this view, utilise the 'science of muddling through'.[85] Is Britain therefore a case where distinctiveness is imagined rather than real? It is certainly possible to find examples of the British avoiding binding commitments and explicit statements of policy. The resistance to the provision of a bill of rights is a case in point. For the Thatcher government, however, underlying principles dictated much policy, for example on privatisation of services. Yet this was perhaps an exception. There does seem to be a conscious perception that in the British case that this is a proper way to proceed, that pragmatism and muddling through are a point of principle and not mere bureaucratic convenience, that binding commitments and overarching frameworks should be avoided where possible. Other nations may muddle through by necessity, but the British do it deliberately, and without explicit frameworks to guide decision-making. That at least is an influential perception.

[85] For a summary of this approach, see John Greenaway, Steve Smith and John Street, *Deciding Factors in British Politics: a case-studies approach* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 24-26.

Britain's experience of war has also played an important role in the formation of its political system and culture. 'War made the state as much as the state made war', Dillon writes, citing as an example the significance of the two world wars this century in the building of collectivism in Britain, as the sense of communal sacrifice during war led to consensus on the need in peacetime also for united action by and for the community.[86] Linda Colley has argued similarly that British experience of war crucially moulded the British state. From its formation in modern form in 1707 through to the beginning of Victoria's reign in 1837, Britain waged war most frequently. In the course of these wars British national identity was forged.[87] Often war was waged against the French, and 'Britain' was defined in opposition to 'France': Britain was Protestant while France was Catholic, the British were down to earth and honest where the French were intellectual and vain. This British character finds expression in the shape of John Bull, the honest, plain, blunt, doughty common man. The British dislike of theories and preference for muddling through may then also be explained as a means of distinguishing Britons from other Europeans, and particularly the 'intellectual' French.[88] War has therefore been significant in determining what it is to be British and what sort of state Britain is. War has also given legitimacy to the state of Britain, has given the state one of its major purposes. Britain itself, an 'imagined political community', imposed on top of older loyalties, has been shaped and given cohesion through war.[89] It is a culture 'used to fighting, which has defined itself through it'.[90] Force has therefore become an ingrained part of British identity and culture.

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[86] G. M. Dillon, 'Britain', in Dillon, *Defence Policy Making: A Comparative Analysis* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), p. 9. Dillon is paraphrasing Charles Tilly, who writes that 'war made the state and the state made war'. See Tilly, 'Reflections on the History of European State Making', in Tilly, (ed), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 42.
[87] Colley, pp. 1-6.
[88] See Jeannine Surel, 'John Bull', in Raphael Samuel, (ed), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, Vol. III, *National Fictions* (London: and New York: Routledge, 1989).
[89] The phrase 'imagined communities' comes from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, revised and extended edition, 1991).
[90] Colley, p. 9.

Despite this, the armed forces have not occupied an especially prominent place in society. For most of its history Britain has relied upon the Royal Navy for its first line of defence. At sea, or based in a few harbour towns, this force has not been widely visible. Generally Britain has possessed only a small professional army, and not a large, national conscript force. Society has not been dominated by martial values. The armed forces have also been largely non-political, and have not intervened in the political process. Civilian control over the armed forces has been accepted by both civil and military authorities. There has been and remains widespread trust and respect of the armed forces within society. They are neither feared or perceived as a threat to civil society. The habit of dressing small children in sailor suits is a measure of the esteem in which the Royal Navy has been held.[91]

As a society increasingly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries informed by liberal democratic ideals, and governed by an increasingly democratic system, has Britain become more peaceful? There is debate in the literature on the causes of wars over whether democratic states are less likely to wage war. The neo-realist position that the anarchical logic of the structure of the international system determines the behaviour of states irrespective of their internal composition is challenged by Michael Doyle, who argues that liberal democracies do not fight, at least against each other.[92] Similarly, Paul Kennedy argues that a more democratic Britain, in which account had increasingly to be taken of public opinion, came to favour peaceful means of resolving international disputes. Below it was noted that according to Kennedy a policy of appeasement was practised by Britain not merely in the 1930s, the period with which the term is now most closely associated, but since the middle of the nineteenth century. One of the other factors underlying this policy was the moral belief that disputes ought to be resolved without

[91] See Cathy Downes, 'Trusty and Wellbeloved: Military Society Relationships in Britain to the Present Day', in Martin Edmonds, (ed), *The Defence Equation: British Military Systems - Policy, Planning and Performance Since 1945* (London: Brassey's, 1986), p. 218.
[92] Michael W. Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1983); reproduced in part in Lawrence Freedman, (ed), *War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 105-7.

force but through negotiation, and the desire of the public for social rather than defence spending. In general, the British sought to apply the tenets of internal democratic government - the rule of law, for example - to their international relations.[93]

Britain still did use force during this period, and maintained an empire by means at least of the threat of force. And of course wars were fought. Yet the use of force may well have become a less welcome option, and one which required greater justification. Although there were still those who saw war as bringing glory, many were inclined to regard it as wrong, and governments in Europe as a whole had to explain their use of force if they were to find popular support for it. The initial enthusiasm for World War One demonstrates that democracies could certainly still prosecute war, and their peoples accepted that in some circumstances war was inevitable or justifiable. Changed views on the legitimacy of force and new preferences for negotiation did not therefore rule out force in all circumstances. If the government and people were becoming less inclined to use force, and more inclined to see the use of force as a last resort, still it could be used, and used to the hilt in 1914-18.

Nevertheless, efforts were made at the peaceful settlement of disputes and at managing international disputes through international organisations. After the First World War in particular, there was hope that war might be avoided through the operations of the League of Nations, with the great powers backing a collective security system to deter (and if necessary deal with) aggression. Britain intended to play its part in that, fulfilling its great power responsibilities. Efforts were made at disarmament and at arms control, with some success - there would be no use of chemical or biological weapons in World War Two as there had been in World War One. No control of bombing was achieved, however, and general disarmament plans came to little. By the early to mid 1930s, the prospects of using international agreements as a means of furthering national security

[93] Kennedy, pp. 16-18.

were receding and recognition dawning that the provision of strong armed forces to deter aggression was a more sensible policy.

As an ostensibly Christian country Britain was also influenced by Western 'just war' theory, which regarded the use of force as morally acceptable in certain circumstances and if conducted in certain ways. It should be a last resort, and it should be governed by discrimination, where military and not civilian targets were attacked, and proportionality, where its use was in proportion to the force being reacted to. If not always upheld, such thinking was influential. The use of force did need to be justified. The First World War, however, posed problems for this theory as total war eroded divisions between combatants and non-combatants. British cities were bombed then, and the threat of city-bombing was ever-present between the wars and caused considerable fear. In World War Two extensive attacks on cities were carried out, and if the forecast devastation did not occur, the idea that civilians should not be targets was dealt a severe blow.[94] In an age of total war of societies against societies, many came to accept that civilians were fair game, though some still protested against strategic bombing.[95] There had always been those who were opposed to all war, of course, and though pacifism was a difficult position to sustain during World War One, it was to a great extent vindicated by it.[96]

Defence decision-making machinery

The same incremental, pragmatic style of decision-making often identified in discussions of the broader British political process is also considered to obtain in the case of defence, and foreign policy, decision-making. Kenneth Waltz writes of 'the ingrained British habit of proceeding empirically, of eschewing scientific analysis and criticism on intellectual or

[94] On just war theory and the effect upon it of strategic bombing during World War Two, see Ruston, chapters one and three.
[95] One well-known protestor against strategic bombing during the war was the Right Reverend George Bell, the Bishop of Chicester, later involved in the nuclear debate. See David Curtis Skaggs, 'Between the Hawks and the Doves: Alastair Buchan and the Institute for Strategic Studies', *Conflict*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1987), p. 81.
[96] On this point Mueller, p. 55.

theoretical grounds, of preferring common sense to abstract reasoning'.[97] The British defence decision-maker is characterised by Waltz as an empiric who 'leans on precedent, carefully digests past experience, and cautiously takes one step at a time'.[98] The British approach to foreign policy, according to Waltz, is

> to proceed by a sidling movement rather than to move directly toward an object, to underplay one's hand, to dampen conflicts and depreciate dangers, to balance parties against each other, to compromise rather than fight, to postpone decisions, to obscure issues rather than confront them, to move as it were by elision from one position of policy to another; such habits, anciently engendered and long crystallized, form the style of British foreign policy.[99]

By way of contrast, Waltz argues that it is characteristic of the US style

> to dramatize differences in order to clarify issues, to confront problems in order to solve them, to assume burdens in order to be able to say that duties have been discharged, to exaggerate dangers in order to justify action, and to draw policies out of a series of collisions between ideas in opposition.[100]

Waltz's view of British decision-makers would probably find much support, possibly among the decision-makers themselves. Another analyst observes the British 'distrust of the abstract' leading to an 'empirical approach which tends to leave unstated and unexamined a great many assumptions about the environment of strategy and the national aims which, however, applicable they may once have been, in time outlive their validity'. In support of this he quotes Oliver Franks, the Foreign Office mandarin: 'We prefer to deal with events as they arise and not be committed by answering hypothetical questions'.[101]

Theories receive short shrift, change comes about by increments, compromise and consensus are preferred to conflict, indirect approaches to frontal assaults. This British

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[97] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics: The American and British Experience* (Longmans: London, 1968), p. 157.
[98] *Ibid*.
[99] *Ibid*, pp. 7-8.
[100] *Ibid*, p. 8.
[101] DeWitt Clinton Armstrong III, *The Changing Strategy of British Bases* (PhD Thesis, Princeton University, 1960; facsimile copy from University Microfilms, Michigan, 1970), p. 32.

decision-making style forms an important part of the strategic culture. In the absence of conscious theories or blueprints, the less conscious beliefs which comprise the strategic culture, or which constitute the 'common sense' to which Waltz refers, containing implicit national strategic objectives, become more important.

Another feature of foreign and defence policy making is secrecy. More than other areas of government activity, these have been bound up with national security, which has been used to justify secrecy. It has been the responsibility of governments to devise policy in this area, and neither public nor parliament has had much say. By keeping secret much relevant information the government can control debate in some areas. Public opinion has come to count for more, but can still be shut out.

Although, as noted above, civilian authority over the armed forces has been accepted, much debate has centred on the issue of central direction of the armed forces, and many reforms in the post-war period have been intended to address this issue. The traditional organisation of defence decision-making had separate ministries for the Royal Navy and the Army, and latterly the Royal Air Force. Each of these ministries accounted separately to Parliament for its funding, conferring a degree of independence upon them. This independence permitted rivalry between the services which posed problems for the formulation of cohesive policy. The post-war reforms sought to impose greater central control on the armed forces and to provide this cohesion. Nevertheless, a feature of British defence policy making prior to 1945 was this lack of central control. The institution of the Ministry of Defence after World War Two was intended to increase co-ordination of the activities of the services.

Government has therefore experienced problems in getting the services to cooperage fully. Central co-ordination of defence policy also involves various other departments of state. As the nature of warfare has changed, more and more departments have an interest in defence policy, and greater bureaucracy is required to manage defence

policy. Most notably the Treasury and the Foreign Office have always been interested in defence. These and the defence departments all have interests in security policy, but from quite different perspectives. Obviously the Treasury's interest is in keeping defence spending within acceptable limits. The Foreign Office is concerned with understanding the policies and outlooks of foreign countries and maintaining good relations with them. The defence ministries more narrowly are charged with identifying threats to national security and countering them. Such a division of labour may be necessary and common to other states, but can have the effect of producing a narrow outlook in the defence ministries themselves. Without the need and the resources to try to understand other states, without the overseas embassies and the area specialists which the Foreign Office maintains, defence ministries tend to measure threats according to the capabilities of potential enemies more than according to their estimated intentions. Without the picture of the needs of the overall economy which the Treasury possesses, defence ministries may regard as necessary for security the provision of higher levels of resources than the economy can bear. Defence decision-makers will likely therefore hold a more conflictual view of the world than decision-makers from other departments, and call for greater defence efforts.

The task of the government, and particularly the Cabinet, is to reconcile different departmental outlooks. This was done in the first half of the twentieth century through a network of committees: 'Defence by committee' is the phrase often used to describe the co-ordination of British defence policy.[102] Committees tend to operate by searching for consensus and promoting compromise, which also supports a style of decision-making which avoids tough decisions and proceeds by increment.

It is interesting to note that the literature on British foreign and defence policy reflects the division of responsibilities at the level of government. Writing on foreign policy is largely based upon Foreign Office records, writing on defence policy on records

[102] This phrase also forms the title of Franklyn Arthur Johnson's book, *Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence 1885-1959* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

from the service and defence ministries. Neither generally pays much attention to Treasury records. This perhaps hints at the problem of co-ordination faced by government, as experts in their own area ignore other concerns. To reconcile differing views and standpoints becomes the challenge for the Cabinet, and this is an important feature of British defence decision-making.

Traditional British strategic culture

From the foregoing sections we can summarise the beliefs and values pertaining to the use of force which have traditionally been held in Britain. To begin with, the following core beliefs and values existed.

1. The nature of war

Beliefs on this subject have changed over time. By the end of World War Two, there was little room for portraying war as a glorious adventure wherein men might prove their manhood. War was certainly regarded as dreadful - though the experience of victory and the sense of unity and national purpose of World War Two meant Britons took a slightly rosier view of war than other Europeans - and peace as far preferable. But experience showed that war was a feature of international politics. It might be possible to prevent it, but it would remain a possibility. Moreover, Munich showed that a policy of avoiding war at any cost was unacceptable. There were times when it might be necessary to use force, for the result of failing to do so could well be worse than war itself. The British did not see themselves as a warlike people, but experience also suggested and national myths confirmed that if put to the test of war they could acquit themselves well. The use of force then was an option to be kept in mind, which could achieve the objectives of preserving independence and sovereignty and defeating evil. In this sense it retained a certain Clausewitzian utility.

If this was so with regard to major war against other great powers, what was the case with regard to minor uses of force? An imperial history of intervention and policing left Britain with many outstanding territories and commitments, and a tradition of using force or its threat to maintain and protect them. This was to some degree discredited, the use of force being seen now as legitimate mainly as a defensive measure, and the colonial contribution to the war effort in the cause of world freedom having staked a claim for their own freedom. Nevertheless this use of force retained some legitimacy.

As to the relationship between war, politics and strategy, the Second World War saw strong civilian control of the use of force. The First World War may have been left to the generals to prosecute, but Churchill kept a tight rein on grand strategy. Military force was married to political objectives much more than in the previous conflict. But the tradition was of civilian control of the army in any case. That had been extended now to grand strategic matters also, rather than the army being left to decide how to achieve objectives.

2. The nature of history

History is important to the British, who have a long, successful, prosperous past on which to look back. History and tradition are therefore sources of pride, and can be seen as successful enough to argue against radical change. 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it', is the rule, and if the traditional ways have served Britain well, why break with them? Continuity is therefore privileged, and change regarded with suspicion. If there has to be change, better to take it easy, one step at a time, to wait and see what happens. As a prosperous state, Britain supports the status quo. In advocating a course of action, an appeal to tradition seems an influential tool. So Liddell Hart points to the traditional British way in warfare from which deviation brings disaster, and so splendid isolation is cast as traditional British policy. These may be 'invented traditions', but the urge to maintain traditions is nonetheless strong for that.

British history is written and understood mostly as political, diplomatic and military history, underscoring the importance of these spheres. It is littered with wars, which seem not exceptional but normal aspects of the past. And British history is often written in isolation from European history, which both reflects and reinforces ideas of British exceptionalism and difference from the rest of Europe. So the way history is conceived in Britain provides an important source of beliefs.

3. The nature of international politics

International politics is understood traditionally in terms of power. The British have seen themselves as a great power, and ranked other states carefully in terms of their economic, military and naval strength. Considerable importance has been attached to maintaining this status and competing with others. Within Europe the balance of power has been a crucial principle, and British policy has been concerned with maintaining that balance by siding against stronger states or coalitions. Conflict and competition, as noted above, are unavoidable aspects of international politics, though they may be avoided through the balance of power, through compromise and co-operation, even appeasement, or through the collaboration of great powers in regimes or international organisations. But in the final analysis states must be able to defend themselves militarily, and must have sufficient power to do so. Great powers in particular must be able to fight their own battles and wars, while second rate states may look to great power protectors. To be able to do this, it is necessary to have more power than others.

4. The role of alliances

As the balancer state, and lacking substantial land forces, Britain had to have allies at times at least in order to take on potentially hegemonic states. But these allies might shift with the balance of power, so that permanent allies or adversaries are few. France, however, against which British identity was defined, has the status of a traditional foe even after the wars this century. Germany, once an ally, has been the enemy most recently in war and some of that feeling lingers. In 1945, preventing a recurrence of German

aggression was a crucial consideration. As a colonial power, Britain expected support and loyalty from the Empire. As a great power, Britain was a member of a select club, which in the Concert of Europe and the League of Nations was one of the states on whom security and stability in the system rested. So the belief that Britain should participate in international institutions at the highest level is an important one. Nevertheless, neutrality and freedom of action have been prized. World War One underscored the problems of fixed alliances. Independence was crucial. During World War Two, Britain fought for the freedom and independence of the threatened states. By the time of that conflict, however, British ability to wage major war alone was compromised, and reliance upon allies essential for victory.

5. The nature of security

As a state which has escaped invasion for several hundred years, and has a sea channel for protection, the British have not developed - as the Russians arguably did - a paranoia about security. The threat of invasion has been taken seriously, and sea power has been maintained at a high level to guard against it. The development of air power brought however a new threat to a traditionally secure state which led to (unrealised) fears and considerable insecurity. Following Munich security has been seen to require a resolute foreign policy and standing up to dictators, but always the possession of substantial military power has been the bottom line of security. National security for the British is understood largely in terms of the military security of the state, its territory and sovereignty, against external threats. These threats have been defined in terms of capabilities more than intentions. The two power standard showed that Britain wanted the naval strength to cope with any threats. With no fixed enemies, and all those with much military power potential enemies, a range of threats had to be insured against.

As an island dependent on trade, it has also been necessary to maintain links with other parts of the world, and the main threats to Britain have come from blockade. Economic security has therefore also been seen as vital, and having sufficient funds to finance wars and pay mercenaries is likewise important. Where possible, as suggested

above, independence has been sought in security terms, and having to rely on others for security disliked. Security of the British Empire as a whole is also crucial to British thinking, as a colonial power has responsibilities to protect its colonies. British spheres of interest also had to be secured: the notion that as a great power Britain had the right to interfere in certain areas where it had a presence, and prevent the interference of others, was another important belief.

6. Morality and human nature

As a Christian country, notions of evil existed and ideas of 'just war' were accepted. Britain ruled out between the wars striking a pre-emptive air attack, as this was seen as morally wrong. For some, all use of force was wrong. For most, the use of force could in certain circumstances be justified, and then had to be conducted within certain rules. Attitudes on this changed, but by the twentieth century this was the common view, and the British thought of themselves as fair and abiding by the rules.

7. Self-image

Many aspects of the British self-image are subsumed within other sections. It is worth noting here, however, that the British did see themselves as exceptional. If they were part of a Western or a European tradition, they were still in many respects unique. A country with a glorious past seeking to uphold tradition, a great power seeking to conduct itself fairly and responsibly in the international realm, a people not warlike but able to give a good account of themselves in war if necessary, as it sometimes was, a strong country willing and able to defend itself.

8. War and the state

The links between war and the state were strong. The state had responsibility for waging war and protecting its citizens, and had often done so in British history. This gave legitimacy to the state, and in the waging of war British national identity was forged.

Social change has come about through war, but war has also been used to manage social relations, as between men and women.

Secondary beliefs:

1. Armed forces and society

The armed forces in Britain have traditionally been respected and not feared. They are not expected and do not expect themselves to interfere in politics, and indeed there is little crossover between politics and the military, with some exceptions such as Wellington, and the influx of former soldiers to parliament after the wars of this century. The Royal Navy in particular has been respected traditionally as the guarantor of national security, though the Royal Air Force, the few to whom so much was owed by so many, took over that role to some extent after 1940. In spite of the importance of war in British history, however, and in defining the culture, it is a less martial culture than pre-war Germany or Japan, because, perhaps, the army has been small and the Navy and Air Force distant from the population as a whole.

2. Strategy

Grand strategy in Britain has been characterised by the debate between the continental commitment and the maritime strategy. Should Britain concentrate on naval forces and sea power and an indirect or peripheral strategy, or must it take on continental powers in land battles? Even if an 'objective' understanding of history suggests a pragmatic mix of the two, it is significant that the debate operates along such lines, with different schools advocating each approach and claiming it is best for a state in Britain's position or it is in fact Britain's traditional strategy. For the maritime school, indirect means, attacks on commerce rather than military forces, and a long war have been preferred. For the continentalists, a decisive battle against the strongest continental force is preferred. Air power can be seen as a continuation of sea power by other means, trying to destroy the

enemy war-making capacity rather than its armed forces. Or it could be seen as seeking a decisive knock-out blow.

3. International agreements and institutions

A growing role has been seen for international institutions in the realms of peace and security, and Britain has been a key actor in those. Britain has been part of grand alliances in war and collective security institutions, and has placed hope in these bodies for the prosecution of war and the maintenance of peace. Support has been offered for these bodies and Britain sees itself as an important member of them. Agreements and treaties have been frequent in British history, as Britain was a founder of modern diplomacy. Arms control agreements such as those on naval affairs have been seen as reasonable means of providing security in this century. Britain, as a status quo power, has generally supported international law and honoured agreements. The rule of law is respected and states expected to abide by it.

4. Technology

Britain has led other nations in industrial development and technological terms. In naval matters Britain has sought the most up-to-date equipment, like the Dreadnoughts, between the wars it had significant armoured forces and led the way in their development and in that of aircraft technology. The Maud Commission, considering devising atomic weapons, crucially linked them to great power status - great powers had to have the most powerful and modern weapons going. So technology has been important, rather than size of armed forces in men. The sheer size of the Royal Navy relative to others has also been important, however, so that quality is not always seen as more important than quantity. In tactics, other states have probably been more innovative, Britain more conservative. No real pattern emerges here.

5. Power projection

To be able to put forces into the field anywhere, to attack enemy colonies and trade and protect its own, it has been important for Britain to be able to project force all over the world. There is a tradition of showing the flag and sending gunboats, of intervening.

6. Defence spending

Without conscription and a large army, the main defence spending has traditionally been on the Royal Navy. In peace and in war a large naval force has been the guarantor of military security. In peacetime, little other spending may be necessary, and wars often were opportunities to steal colonies and intercept shipping, thereby paying for themselves. Island status also allows time when war breaks out to retreat to the safe haven and develop forces there. More recently, however, there has been a need for forces at a state of readiness in peacetime to wage immediate war and prevent continental allies being overrun. Higher levels of peacetime defence spending have become necessary and accepted.

7. Crises

There is no tradition of British brinkmanship. Under an appeasement policy Britain sought to avoid conflict and compromise in crisis, which was seen as a time of danger which could spill into war. The Munich crisis was a shock which changed view of crises, seeing them as times of danger requiring resolution and firmness.

8. Decision-making style

A pragmatic, conservative decision-making style has been apparent, in which change is incremental if it occurs at all and compromise and consensus favoured. Secrecy is the norm in the defence field, with the ordinary public and Parliament denied much say or knowledge. Civilian control has been established over the military.

9. Interservice rivalry

The traditions of the separate services have allowed competition between them and increasing concern to establish central control over them. The Royal Navy, traditionally the senior service, has seen its size and reputation shrink, while the Royal Air Force has fought to establish itself.

Conclusion

This is necessarily a somewhat impressionistic analysis of traditional British strategic culture, based largely on secondary accounts and not easy to prove. It is impossible to rule out the influence of contemporary concerns on the beliefs and values on which attention has been focused. That the author knows what comes after 1945, and the issues that need explaining, must be borne in mind when considering the treatment of the pre-1945 period. It could be that, just as history is written for someone and some purpose, so notions of strategic culture are conceived in order to make sense of the present. We have seen how constructions of a traditional British way in warfare were used to influence contemporary debates in the 1930s. So too may strategic culture be constructed in a way that makes sense of later events. These are dangers inherent in this approach. Yet it is impossible to empty one's mind of knowledge of the recent past when examining the more distant past. To be aware of the problems of this approach and to try to guard against them is the best that can be done.

There are no doubt omissions in the above analysis. Scholars of gender could point to the distinct experiences of war which women have had, and identify women as constituting sub-cultures differing in significant respects from the dominant, masculine culture. The beliefs identified here belong most clearly to the dominant culture, the elite. Many of them will, however, have been shared by the bulk of the population. Indeed, it is assumed that dramatic events will often touch entire populations. For example, anti-war sentiment provoked by the horror of the First World War would be spread widely

throughout the population. Other sub-cultures are hinted at. The continental commitment and maritime strategy schools could also be characterised as sub-cultures grouped around certain issues. The three armed services can be seen as sub-cultures based on roles. The pacifist tradition in Britain might be another sub-culture. But the aim here has been to pinpoint the general beliefs of the elite rather than to identify sub-cultures.

The analysis has been more methodologically eclectic than that of, say, Alastair Johnston.[103] However, there being no one obvious source of British strategic culture, as there is in the Chinese case, the net needs to be cast wider. Poetry and films, documents and works of history, have been used as sources from which beliefs and values have been inferred and as evidence for the existence of beliefs. Symbolic events and names - such as Dunkirk and the Blitz - have been identified which reveal meanings and imply the existence of beliefs. Patterns of behaviour have also been used to infer strategic beliefs and values. Inevitably all these sources need to be interpreted, and the dangers already described below lie in wait. Nevertheless, the attempt has been made to provide a thorough study of traditional British strategic culture. The attempt was not made, however, to identify a rigid ranked set of preferences, as Alastair Johnston does. A looser set of beliefs is indicated here, arrived at in a more interpretive fashion.

A number of other issues arose in applying the research framework. First, in dealing with geography and resources, what matters is how the implications of these factors have been interpreted over time. There was therefore little to be said about them on their own, but rather their implications were considered in the section on history and experiences. The second issue concerns that section. Dealing with history, and with myth, posed difficulties as past and present interact with each other. If the past influences beliefs in the present, so too do readings of the past change over time and as circumstances change. A related issue is that, in undertaking the analysis, sensitivity to change was borne in mind. Changing attitudes to war were described as new experiences

[103] See Johnston, *Cultural Realism*.

occurred. The shock of World War One in particular affected thinking. On the whole, however, the continuity in British strategic thinking is striking. Change tends to be very gradual, and few dramatic events demanding change were identified.

Another issue is that not all sections of the framework were found to apply to Britain. The profile therefore does not mirror the framework exactly. Given the assumption of national variation which underpins the strategic culture approach, however, it is to be expected that profiles of different states will differ in their emphases and the framework will not fit all.

Earlier chapters posed the question of how political culture and strategic culture are related. With regard to this issue, in the British case, styles of foreign and defence policy-making mirror the broader political style: secrecy is a hallmark of government, in strategic matters at least as much as in other departments. The tendency to 'muddle through', and to favour pragmatic approaches over grand designs, can be seen in foreign and defence-policy making as in the rest of government.

A final issue which should be broached here is what this sketch of traditional British strategic culture implies for the validity of neo-realist thinking. It was argued earlier that examining strategic beliefs across time and cultures had the potential to challenge neo-realism. If beliefs which are claimed by neo-realists to be imposed by the nature of the international system can be shown to vary over time and places, then the neo-realist position becomes more exposed. With regard to the British case, neo-realists might claim that their views are upheld. Conflict, sometimes leading to war, is regarded as inevitable by the British. Power needs to be balanced and maximised. Against this, however, it has to be said that the British case would be expected to yield such findings. Realist and neo-realist thinking emerged in large measure from the academic research communities of the United Kingdom and the United States. British historical experience can be expected therefore to have influenced the development of neo-realist thinking

itself. Even so, the case can be made that attitudes to war have changed over time in Britain, and that reluctance to use force has increased. In this sense there is support also for the position taken by writers like John Mueller. Mueller sees war as 'merely an idea - an institution, like dueling or slavery, that has been grafted onto human existence'. It can, like dueling, disappear, and it can do so without changes in human nature or the international system.[104] Continue change in attitudes on war could see this happen. Yet the evidence here is not conclusive. Further comparative studies are needed to clear up this issue.

The profile could no doubt be challenged in many respects. Further studies in the future could refine it and focus on certain aspects in more depth. For the moment, attention will turn in the next chapter to whether and in what ways it assists our understanding of the 1945-1952 period. How influential were traditional beliefs and values in the debates and decisions of this period?

[104] Mueller, p. *ix*.

Chapter Six:

Strategic Culture and British Grand Strategy 1945-52

In the previous chapter, the first sections of the framework developed in Chapter Four were applied to the United Kingdom. A thorough profile was assembled of the key elements of British strategic culture up to around 1945. The second section of the framework considered the utility of strategic culture, and it is to that question that we now turn. As Chapter Five argued, choices were made by the Attlee government during the years between 1945 and 1952 continue to influence British defence posture down the present day. This chapter asks to what extent the decisions taken after 1945 on British defence policy, and the manner in which they were taken, reflect the key strategic beliefs and values identified in the profile, or to what extent the new circumstances after 1945 led to new reasoning. The aim is to show where strategic culture can aid understanding of British behaviour and decisions taken, in what ways it can operate and how important it can be. The aim is not to come to incontrovertible conclusions regarding the utility of strategic culture. That requires more comprehensive and probably comparative studies. Questions will remain unanswered, therefore, but this chapter nevertheless hopes demonstrate the actual and the potential utility of the strategic culture approach.

Attention will be focused on two main aspects of Britain's post-war grand strategic policy. First to be considered will be the British decision to acquire nuclear weapons, taken in January 1947. Why was this decision taken, and how was it reached? Next the development of a deterrent strategy based mainly on nuclear but also conventional weapons will be examined. The analysis will concentrate on the level of grand strategy, discussing major decisions about whether to have nuclear weapons and

how to integrate them into overall strategy rather than lower level considerations, such as how many nuclear capable aircraft to acquire. That is not to say that these are not important questions, or that they do not reveal the existence of distinct strategic sub-cultures within governments. However, it is to be expected that on the level of decisions of broad principles the effect of strategic culture will be seen more clearly than such lower level decisions where factors such as bureaucratic infighting may muddy the waters.

Introduction

The significance of the year 1945 for Britain, and indeed the world, was enormous. World War Two came to an end with Britain on the victorious side. The final act of the six year conflict was the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. If the death toll from these two bombs was small in relation to the total number of casualties in the war as a whole, it was nevertheless achieved with a speed and an economy of effort which ensured that its political shock waves continue to be felt today. In 1945, a new era of warfare began, and a new era of politics and international politics also. A new Labour government was elected handsomely, for however well Churchill had managed the war effort, he was not seen as the right leader to govern in peacetime.

Before turning to the issues identified above, it is worthwhile making a few preliminary points about the situation facing British policy-makers and how they saw it. It is important first of all to note that, although 1945 is commonly taken as the first year of the nuclear age, a series of gradual steps took the world into the new era. In 1945, only atomic weapons had been tested. Much more powerful than existing weapons, these were much less so than the thermonuclear weapons which were first tested in 1952. Moreover, there were in the late 1940s and early 1950s few atomic weapons relative to the numbers deployed in the late 1950s and subsequently. And not until the late 1950s were guided missiles beginning to complement the manned bomber as the vehicle for delivery of nuclear weapons, (though World War Two V-weapons foreshadowed their existence).

Also, the United States enjoyed an atomic monopoly until 1949 and considerable superiority over the Soviet Union until long thereafter.

If 1945 is in retrospect a convenient date for separating the pre-nuclear and post-nuclear eras, therefore, it did not necessarily appear to everyone at the time that an old era had ended and a new one begun. Clement Attlee did, however, see it in those terms. He believed that the arrival of the atomic bomb had brought about 'not a quantitative but a qualitative change in the nature of warfare'. Moreover, Attlee believed that worse was still to come. Even in September 1945 he was alert to the probability that in the future bombs would be of much greater power, would be delivered by rocket and would be deployed by an increasing number of states.[1] Churchill, on the other hand, would later comment that 'the atomic bomb, with all its terror, did not carry us outside the scope of human control or manageable events in thought or action, in peace and war'. It was the advent of the hydrogen bomb with which, Churchill believed, 'the entire foundation of human affairs was revolutionised'.[2]

Churchill's judgement was a retrospective one. Some more immediate reactions to the atomic bomb were however much less dramatic and tended to see it as merely a 'bigger and better bomb' rather than a revolutionary development. Andrew Pierre speculates that this may have been typical of the British military at that time.[3] It has also been argued that many British military planners of the early post-war period, men hardened to massive destruction by their wartime experiences, were likely to take a sanguine view of the advent of the atomic bomb and assign little importance to it.[4] And there were other unsensational analyses of the effectiveness of atomic weapons, such as that put forward by the

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[1] Margaret Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence: Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945-1952*, Vol. I, *Policy Making* (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 78-79.

[2] Cited in Michael Mandelbaum, *The Nuclear Revolution: International Politics Before and After Hiroshima* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 3.

[3] See Andrew J. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics: The British Experience with an Independent Strategic Force 1939-1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 72-73.

[4] See Mark Venables, *The Place of Air Power in Post-War British Defence Planning, and its Influence on the Genesis and Development of the Theory of Nuclear Deterrence, 1945-52* (PhD Thesis, King's College London, 1985), pp. 11-12.

Nobel prize winning physicist and strategic commentator P.M.S. Blackett, in whose opinion atomic weapons would not alone be decisive in a war fought between the Great Powers.[5] There was, therefore, a tension between the view that weapons had been created which transformed strategy, and the belief that these weapons possessed unprecedented but not revolutionary power. Could they therefore be fitted easily into existing strategic ideas, or were wholly new ones necessary?

Diplomatically also 1945 can be seen from the perspective of the 1990s as the break between hot war and cold war, but again the transition was not immediate. The alliance which had successfully taken on the Axis powers in the Second World War did gradually break up, and its members became adversaries in a Cold War confrontation marked by much greater instability and urgency than has been the case since the early 1960s. Events such as the Berlin blockade and the Korean War illustrated the build up of tension and the probing of resolve which were taking place in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Not long after the end of the Second World War, the prospect of another conflict appeared, with the Soviet Union ranged against its wartime allies, Britain and the United States. Relations between the latter, so intimate and important during the war, were for a time afterwards strained. In the first two years after the end of the war the United States toyed with isolationism. During this time certain areas of difficulty emerged, notable among them the ending of atomic energy collaboration between the two states. This was achieved through the 1946 US Atomic Energy Act, and collaboration was not fully restored until 1958. This dismayed the British, whose constant efforts to obtain a return to the wartime British-US atomic energy partnership were so often dashed during the late 1940s and early 1950s.[6] With the signing in 1949 of the North Atlantic Treaty the United States formally committed itself to the defence of Western Europe, however.

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[5] P.M.S. Blackett, *Military and Political Consequences of Atomic Energy* (London: Turnstile Press, 1948), p. 56.

[6] On the McMahon Act and subsequent attempts to restore atomic energy collaboration between Britain and the United States, see John Baylis, *Anglo-American Defence Relations 1939-1984: The Special Relationship* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, second edition, 1984), pp. 30-34, 41-45 and 66-72.

Against this background of doubt and changing circumstances, British planners had to determine atomic policy. But of one thing there was no doubt: the parlous economic situation in which Britain found itself as a result of the war. The costs of victory continued to be paid long after hostilities had ceased, and the defence budget was continually pressured by the need to avert economic disaster. However, although by the start of the 1950s it would exert considerable pressure on the deliberations of the Chiefs of Staff across the board in defence planning, the necessity for retrenchment did not immediately affect policy on atomic weapons as much as on conventional arms.

These points provide important aspects of the situational context for post-war defence decision-making in Britain. The decision-makers faced an uncertain world and perceived numerous constraints on their actions. However, even Kenneth Waltz, a structural realist for whom the nature of the international system determines in large measure the behaviour of its units, believes that the British still had plenty of room for choice. They did not have to opt for a major power defence policy, with nuclear weapons and large scale forces. For Waltz, the choices made were not necessarily the best. Britain would have needed to put far more resources into defence in order appreciably to improve its position, and could have invested far less without substantially weakening it.[7] The question arises, what then shaped the choices which were made? Consideration will now be given to this question, beginning with the process which led to a decision actually being taken in January 1947 to manufacture a British atomic weapon.

The atomic bomb decision

In January 1947 the GEN 163 committee, a small, ad hoc committee of the Cabinet, decided that it would be the policy of the British government in the post-war era independently to develop and produce atomic weapons.[8] In taking the decision, the

[7] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics: The American and British Experience* (Longmans: London, 1968), p. 141.
[8] Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), CAB 130/16, GEN 163/1st, 8 January 1947.

committee was not starting from scratch. The British had already decided during the war to attempt to construct an atomic weapon, and had spent many years, some in association with the United States, working to build a weapon which would harness the power of atomic energy. British scientists had played their part in the Manhattan Project, ensuring that such a weapon was perfected before the war's end. Obviously, the possibility that the Germans might build an atomic bomb had provided the primary motivation for the British atomic energy programme. By the time the Axis powers had been defeated, however, the British, who had extensive knowledge of the secrets of the atomic bomb but no weapon of their own, faced a question which the US administration did not: should they carry on in peacetime their quest for the new weapon?

Given that the British had already taken a decision to develop an atomic weapon during the war, and that their scientists had been heavily involved in atomic energy research, there was considerable momentum behind carrying on with a military atomic energy project. As Groom notes, the scientific instincts of those involved would have rebelled at the prospect of abandoning the project before its completion.[9] Had the British faced a decision to begin an atomic energy programme from scratch, the burden of proof would have rested with those in favour. They would have needed to make the case for devoting scarce resources to such a programme. A decision to continue existing work was a different matter. Here the burden of proof lay with those who would abandon atomic energy development. It is striking that not only was a decision to abstain from nuclear development not reached, but nobody in government expected that it would be. It was widely believed that Britain would produce atomic bombs. The GEN 163 committee was simply making official and explicit a policy that had hitherto been generally assumed, if not formally acknowledged.

Evidence for this interpretation comes from a number of key decisions taken after 1945. These were premised on the tacit belief that Britain would produce its own atomic

[9] A.J.R. Groom, *British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons* (London: Pinter, 1974), p. 35.

weapons. The RAF, for example, had in the middle of 1946 requisitioned a long range bomber. Although no direct reference was made to the A-bomb, this aircraft was presumably intended to be its carrier.[10] Also, the Chief of the Air Staff had in August 1946 ordered an atomic weapon from the Ministry of Supply, which had itself shortly thereafter included a figure for the development of the weapon in its budget.[11] Within the atomic energy programme itself, decisions were taken with the eventual production of weapons in mind. Where the production of fissile material was concerned, the government had opted for plutonium rather than uranium on the grounds that this would be best for bomb making purposes, although it was also quite suitable for the industrial side of the atomic energy programme.[12] Thus the various sections of the administration operated on the assumption that bombs would in time be produced despite the fact that the formal decision to that effect was not taken before 1947.

The prevailing feeling, then, was that atomic bombs would be produced, and few questioned the wisdom of such a step or put forward an alternative. Nevertheless, a choice had to be made, and it could have been to forgo a bomb project. A government facing major economic difficulties and with a large programme of social reform could have decided to opt out of the atomic energy business, to leave it to its ally the United States. The major questions which must therefore be addressed are, how and why was this decision reached? What issues were raised, and what process followed?

An initial point here is that there is little documentary evidence on which to draw, for the decision was taken by a cabinet sub-committee, the minutes of which reveal little discussion. Nor was there lengthy consideration in other committees prior to the decision, or preparation of papers on the subject. There is little to guide the traditional historian or the rational choice analyst in reconstructing the goals of the decision-makers and the

[10] PRO, AIR 20/7111, 3rd Draft of Air Staff Requirement for Long Range Bomber, June 1946.
[11] PRO, AB16/1905, Perrin, 'Notes for Proposed Talk with COS - Military Applications of Atomic Energy', 12 November 1946; and Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, p. 78.
[12] Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, pp. 166-67.

options considered. It might be expected that these would be articulated at points where the wisdom of continuing down the road to nuclear development was questioned. There were two such points.

The first expression of doubt was contained in a paper circulated by the government scientist P.M.S. Blackett in November 1945.[13] Blackett argued that it should not be a 'foregone conclusion' that Britain should build its own bomb. The decision, if taken, should be based upon 'detailed analysis'. Blackett, seemingly alone among those in government, attempted to consider the case both for and against a British bomb in practical, military security terms. He weighed such factors as the numbers of bombs that each of the wartime 'Big Three' might be expected to produce over the course of the next few years, the international political situation, and the position of Britain within it. He considered the probable circumstances in which the British would want to use the bomb, and the possibility that Britain might end up with a stock of bombs which was too small to be effective in war but could invite atomic attack. Blackett concluded that for Britain to make a bomb 'would tend to decrease rather than to increase our long-term security'. Instead Britain should announce that it would not make bombs for 5-10 years, nor ask the USA for any, but that it would press on with atomic energy research for peaceful purposes.

Blackett's paper was therefore a serious appreciation of the question of whether bomb production would benefit British security, and it was the only paper of its kind within government. If his calculations were wrong, they nevertheless deserved consideration. Yet Attlee and the Chiefs of Staff rejected the paper almost out of hand. The Chiefs expressed their 'complete disagreement' with the recommendation that Britain should undertake publicly not to produce atomic weapons, while Attlee characterised Blackett as a 'typical scientist' writing 'on political and military problems on which he is a

[13] PRO, PREM 8/115, Memo by P.M.S. Blackett, 'Atomic Energy - An Immediate Policy For Great Britain', 5 November 1945.

layman'.[14] Blackett, who served with the Royal Navy during the Battle of Jutland and worked extensively on operational research during the Second World War, might be considered no more a layman than Attlee himself. His argument was put forward in a language recognised during the war as rational. In Gowing's opinion, it 'merited an answer on the same plane'.[15] But it was not answered in kind.

A later objection to the British bomb appears to have made a greater impact. At a cabinet committee meeting in October 1946, the Chancellor, Hugh Dalton, and the President of the Board of Trade, Sir Stafford Cripps, opposed the construction of a gaseous diffusion plant as part of the atomic energy programme, urging

> that we must consider seriously whether we could afford to divert from civilian consumption and the restoration of our balance of payments, the economic resources required for a project on this scale.[16]

Here too, a rational objection to atomic bomb production, this time on economic grounds, was being raised. According to Sir Michael Perrin, Portal's assistant, Dalton and Cripps were winning the argument when Bevin, arriving late, turned the tables.[17] His reasoning will be considered later, but it did not, as far as the records show, address directly the question of the opportunity cost of the bomb. Whether or not Dalton and Cripps would have carried the day without Bevin's intervention is questionable. However, at the meeting in January when the decision was taken to manufacture the bomb, Dalton and Cripps were notable absentees, not invited presumably in order to prevent a repeat of events at the October meeting. Dissension and debate were, it appears, not welcome, and rational arguments were to be sidelined rather than countered rationally.

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[14] *Ibid*. The reaction of the Chiefs of Staff is in Jacob to PM, 12 November 1945; the reaction of Attlee is in Anderson to PM.

[15] Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, p. 172.

[16] The official record is in PRO, CAB 130/2, GEN 75/15th mtg., 25 October 1946. This can be supplemented by the account of Sir Michael Perrin, in a 1982 BBC *Timewatch* programme, described by Peter Hennessy in *The Times*, 30 September 1982.

[17] See Peter Hennessy in *The Times*, 30 September 1982.

Thus, while it may not have been official policy to develop a British bomb until 1947, the voices of Blackett and Dalton and Cripps were the only ones raised against that course. With those voices all but ignored, any decision other than that eventually taken always seemed unlikely. Attlee's and the Chiefs of Staff's responses to Blackett's paper showed that it would take a great deal of arm-twisting to force the government to renounce production. Blackett had argued in his paper that atomic bomb production should be the subject of detailed analysis and must not be regarded as a 'foregone conclusion', but the reaction to his paper suggests that in this at least he was mistaken. The decision to build the bomb surely was a foregone conclusion.

The questions remain, what made the conclusion foregone? On what reasoning and assumptions was it based? With so little documentary evidence to inspect, it is not easy to answer these questions. And if the conclusion was foregone, why was the decision taken only in January 1947 rather than at any earlier stage?

To begin with the latter question, government reticence was in part a response to external circumstances. A decision to develop atomic weapons had wider than domestic ramifications at a time of uncertain international circumstances. For one thing, the British had initially hoped that their close wartime atomic energy relationship with the United States could be carried over into the post-war era. Indeed, according to Margaret Gowing, Whitehall believed that if this was not the case then the British could not continue in the atomic energy field.[18] However, it took some time for the fate of British-US collaboration to be decided. Attlee rejected an early call by officials to issue a directive for the manufacture of bombs, preferring to wait at least until he had discussed the future with the US leaders during a meeting in November 1945.[19] But the November talks were inconclusive, and throughout the first half of 1946 the US position on co-operation with

[18] Margaret Gowing, *Prologue: Early Western Nuclear Relationships*, Nuclear History Program Occasional Paper No. 4 (Center for International Security Studies at Maryland, University of Maryland, 1989), pp. 12-13.
[19] Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, p. 73.

Britain was not made clear. Until that position could be ascertained the British may have thought it inappropriate firmly to commit themselves to any course of action, and found long-term planning more than a little awkward. In any case, while they could have taken a decision in principle to build a bomb at any time, it was not until the United States had closed the door to co-operation in mid-1946 that the British were forced to choose between a wholly independent project or no project at all.

Another possible complication for British policy makers was that international control of atomic energy was at this time being placed on the agenda of world politics. Given the British vulnerability to atomic assault, there was at first some support for international control within the government.[20] There is here a parallel with the interwar years, when the British had become obsessed by 'a pervasive fear of a knock-out blow by aerial bombardment'.[21] This fear arose, according to Uri Bialer, once the Germans had in 1917 made their first daylight raids on London.[22] From then on the traditional British immunity to attack was compromised, and civilians found themselves potentially in the front line. Although the threat was exaggerated, it still led the government to seek an air disarmament agreement as one route to security.[23] So too after the war the British considered international agreements as one means to remove the new and even more powerful threat of atomic air attack.

But the government was only too aware of the manifold difficulties which would necessarily accompany any international control scheme. The problem most often singled out was that of establishing adequate safeguards to ensure compliance. The Chiefs of Staff were adamant that no international control scheme could be contemplated which did

[20] PRO CAB 84/79, J.P. (46) 36 (Final), JPS Report on 'Control of Atomic Energy', 27 February 1946; CAB 134/6, ACAE (45) 2nd, 20 September 1945; CAB 131/13, DO (46) 138, Note by the COS on the Soviet Disarmament Proposal, 18 November 1946.
[21] Uri Bialer, *The Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics 1932-1939* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980), p. 151.
[22] *Ibid*, p. 2
[23] *Ibid*, p. 3

not provide for unequivocal rights of inspection.[24] Ministers recognised that much depended upon the Soviet attitude, and initially there was some hope that the USSR could be brought into a workable scheme.[25] However, this became less and less likely as the Cold War intensified, and hopes for, and belief in, international control flagged. By 1947 the Chiefs of Staff were arguing that an international control agreement would in any case be to the disadvantage of the British, suggesting that even with 'unequivocal rights of inspection' they would not welcome it; and by 1949 the Vice Chiefs of Staff would contend that as long as the British held a lead over the USSR in atomic weapon technology - as it was still supposed they did - they should keep a free hand. Also, should the Soviet government propose a Convention to prohibit the use of atomic weapons, insistence on inspection rights would be a useful tactic to thwart their ambitions.[26]

Even in 1945 and 1946, however, when the government was sympathetic to the cause of international control, it did not consider suspending its efforts to develop an indigenous atomic energy programme. It was for instance argued within the Advisory Committee on Atomic Energy in September 1945 that

> while we should certainly do everything in our power to reach a satisfactory agreement, we should not rely for security upon this alone, but should take all possible steps to strengthen our own position.[27]

Similarly, the Chiefs of Staff had advised that 'to delay production pending the outcome of negotiations regarding international control might well prove fatal to the security of the British Commonwealth'.[28]

Attlee himself, though a supporter of efforts to secure an international control

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[24] PRO, PREM 8/116, p. 130, Hollis to PM, 10 October 1945.
[25] PRO, CAB 130/2, GEN 75/4, 11 October 1945.
[26] PRO, DEFE 4/4, COS (47) 73rd, 11 June 1947; DEFE 4/7, COS (47) 116th, 5 September 1947; DEFE 4/25, COS (49) 155, Confidential Annex, 'International Control of Atomic Energy', 21 October 1949.
[27] PRO, CAB 134/6, ACAE (45) 2nd, 20 September 1945
[28] PRO, PREM 8/116, Hollis to PM, 10 October 1945.

agreement, was nevertheless intent upon securing as strong as possible a position for the British programme, both domestically and with regard to co-operation with the USA, even if this compromised the chances of obtaining an international agreement.[29] So the issue of international control of atomic energy does not appear significantly to have diverted the British from their intention of developing their own atomic weapons. In any case, it was felt that any international control scheme would have to focus on prohibiting the use, rather than the production, of atomic weapons, so that the British were not put in the position of having to choose between national production or international control of atomic weapons.[30]

The question of international control did, however, add to an atmosphere in which the best policy was to avoid taking formal decisions. There was little to be gained, and much to be lost (not least in terms of public image) by making a clear commitment to bomb production while simultaneously pressing for an international control regime. But another factor, and perhaps the most significant, is that in 1945 it was simply not necessary to make a positive commitment to build a bomb, as the atomic energy programme was in its infancy. The early steps being taken did not require a firm decision on whether the focus was to be on military or commercial uses of the atom. Procrastination was therefore possible, and, because of the sensitivity of the matter, hardly surprising. Why take such a momentous decision before it was unavoidable?

As well as there being no need for a decision to be taken before 1947, there was little pressure for one. Only two recommendations were made to the government between the end of the war and the close of 1946 that production of atomic bombs should begin. Both came in 1945, one from the Chiefs of Staff and the other from a committee of officials. The message from the Chiefs in October 1945 was that they considered it

[29] Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, p. 72.

[30] See PRO, CAB 130/3, GEN 75/10, Report by officials for the Cabinet, 'International Control of Atomic Energy', 29 October 1945; although in PRO, CAB 130/2, GEN 75/4, 11 October 1945, it was suggested that international ownership of production would be more effective than an agreement never to use the bomb.

'essential that British production of atomic weapons should start as soon as possible', and this was echoed the same month by the recommendation of the committee of officials that the government 'should issue a directive laying it down that priority is to be given' to 'production of bombs on a large scale for our own defence as soon as possible'.[31] Both, however, were brushed aside by the government, and neither appears to have been followed up. By late 1946, on the other hand, scientists had to begin to plan for the development of the ordnance side of an atomic weapon and realised that no mandate existed for bomb production. It was then that Lord Portal, the Controller of Production, Atomic Energy, within the Ministry of Supply, decided to raise with Attlee the matter of a formal decision to build an atomic bomb.

There were reasons, therefore, not to take a decision prior to 1947. The process by which the decision was reached, however, recalls Waltz's description of the British style of policy, mentioned in the previous chapter:

> To proceed by a sidling movement rather than move directly toward an object, to underplay one's hand, to dampen conflicts and depreciate dangers, to balance parties off against each other, to compromise rather than fight, to postpone decisions, to obscure issues rather than confront them, to move as it were by elision from one position of policy to another; such habits, anciently engendered and long crystallized, form the style of British foreign policy.[32]

In Britain, the decision to produce atomic weapons was postponed for as long as possible, and even then not much was decided. In his analysis of the decision by the Truman administration to develop the hydrogen bomb, Warner Schilling points to the minimalist nature of that decision.[33] A similar situation prevailed in the case of the British atomic bomb decision. All that was decided was that Britain would produce atomic bombs. On crucial questions of detail, no decisions were made. How many bombs would it make?

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[31] PRO, PREM 8/116, Hollis to PM, 10 October 1945; and PRO CAB 130/3, GEN 75/10, Report by officials for the Cabinet, 'International Control of Atomic Energy', 29 October 1945.
[32] Waltz, pp. 7-8.
[33] Warner R. Schilling, 'The H-Bomb Decision: How to Decide Without Actually Choosing', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (March 1961), pp. 24-46.

How many would be required to be effective militarily? In what time scale could that number be produced? In what circumstances would they be used, and against whom? If the Soviet Union was assumed to be the enemy, would it in fact benefit Britain to possess and/or to employ atomic weapons? Most of these questions were not even raised, except by Blackett, whose thoughtful analysis was never debated.

There were many other matters which were not discussed, or in some cases raised at all. How were the atomic bombs once built to be delivered to their targets? If bombs were wanted, was it essential that steps be taken to ensure that a bomber force would be ready to carry them? And what about questions of cost? How much would it cost to produce the atomic force? Could the nation afford the cost, at a time of profound economic crisis? What would be the opportunity cost in terms of defence spending? How would the atomic force be integrated into the armed forces as a whole?

Attlee's response to Dalton and Cripps's broaching of the subject of the cost of the atomic energy programme was to remove them from the decision making process altogether, while Blackett was marginalised. There was therefore little inclination to confront the issues raised or to resolve them. Certainly there was no inclination to do so publicly. When finally a decision had to be taken, secrecy was maintained. Only a few ministers were involved. There was no debate, no attempt on the lines of the Blackett paper to consider the practical questions posed by the decision to build a bomb. The January 1947 decision was a minimalist one indeed, a 'course of action which would close off the least number of future alternatives, one which would avoid the most choice'.[34]

The decision-making process does therefore appear consistent with traditional British practice, as expressed by Waltz. The uncertainty of the international environment provided grounds for delaying decisions, and the British decision-making style was well-suited to such delay. To determine whether, in the absence of such international

[34] *Ibid*, p. 38.

pressures, the decision would have been taken in the same fashion, remains a speculative counterfactual issue. However, traditional style can be argued to have pre-disposed the British towards this decision-making process, and made it 'natural' to proceed in this way.

What about the reasons why that decision was taken? Because of the way in which the decision was taken, it is not easy to be sure. The desire not to confront the issues, in the way Blackett tried to do, means there was no detailed analysis and discussion of the pros and cons of bomb production. The GEN 163 committee was, it would appear, convened in order to put the official seal on bomb production rather than to debate the matter. Lord Portal had originally asked Attlee whether a formal decision should now be taken to build a bomb, or whether work should proceed on the existing informal basis.[35] If a formal decision was now to be taken, Portal offered three options, which were put before the committee. (i) Not to proceed with the development of the bomb, (ii) to proceed with it through the normal channels or (iii) to do so in secret. With minimal discussion and no dissent, the ministerial committee approved the third option.[36] Without Dalton and Cripps, consensus on the decision was easy to achieve. With this consensus, and given that it had long been assumed that bombs would be produced, it doubtless seemed unnecessary to consider systematically the various economic, technical, scientific, political and military factors involved in the decision. The paucity of debate hinders attempts to determine what rationales underlay the decision and how they ranked in importance. It seems, however, that various rationales were able to coexist among and within different people. It was rarely necessary, if at all, openly to articulate and to justify these rationales or to subject them to close scrutiny. As Gowing argues, 'the British decision to make an atomic bomb had "emerged" from a body of general assumptions'.[37]

What were these assumptions? One had been expressed by the famous Maud Committee, set up during the Second World War to consider whether Britain should

[35] PRO, AB 16/1905, Portal, 'Notes for COS', 13 November 1946.
[36] PRO, CAB 130/16, GEN 163/1st, 8 January 1947.
[37] Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, p. 184.

pursue research aimed at developing an atomic weapon. In recommending in 1941 that Britain should attempt to develop a bomb, committee members obviously had in mind the threat that Germany might develop such a weapon first. They also observed, however, that 'even if the war should end before the bombs are ready the effort would not be wasted, since no nation would care to risk being caught without a weapon of such decisive possibilities'.[38] This statement surely reflected core beliefs about the nature of international politics, and the need for states to act to secure themselves from attack. If one state could develop atomic bombs, it could not be trusted not to use them, so others would need to have them to defend themselves or deter attack.

More specific to Britain was a belief articulated by Bevin at the meeting of the atomic energy committee in October 1946. Then, the economic ministers opposed the building of the gaseous diffusion plant, arguing that economic stringency was required. Ernest Bevin determinedly opposed cost-cutting which could affect the production of a bomb. He did not advance economic arguments in support of this position. Instead he voiced his anger at the manner of his treatment by the Americans, and in particular by Secretary of State Byrnes. Possession of atomic weapons would help to guarantee equal status and fair treatment. Bevin reportedly told the committee: 'We've got to have this thing over here whatever it costs. We've got to have a bloody Union Jack on top of it'.[39]

Bevin won the argument, in part no doubt due to the force of his personality and standing in the government, and in part through advancing an argument which, though it did not directly tackle the point raised, seems laden with meaning. Britain was a Great Power and should be treated as such. It was not to be condescended to by other states, even other Great Powers. Since Great Powers possessed the most up-to-date and effective weaponry, and had to be able to wage war against any other state, Britain must have its own atomic weapons if it was to be treated as a Great Power. Many have seen the British

[38] Cited in Margaret Gowing, *Britain and Atomic Energy 1939-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 395.
[39] Peter Hennessy and Caroline Anstey, 'Birth of the British Bomb', *The Independent*, 12 May 1988.

decision to acquire atomic bombs as a means of compensating for decline from Great Power status. Clark and Wheeler make the point that this may be anachronistic.[40] Yet the argument is less that the British government consciously regarded Britain as declining in power and sought compensation, than simply that as a state with a Great Power tradition, it was 'natural' for Britain to acquire these weapons. Bevin's was an argument, it appears, which Dalton and Cripps could not trump.

As with so many aspects of British foreign policy at this time and since, the relationship with the USA was a prominent consideration. When the decision on the bomb was finally taken in January 1947, the only substantive argument advanced in favour of the bomb was Bevin's statement - upon which he did not enlarge, according to the minutes of the meeting - that 'we could not afford to acquiesce in a US monopoly of this new development'.[41] In the absence of an international control agreement, the Foreign Secretary argued, Britain must possess its own atomic weapons. Again, a sovereign Great Power had to remain capable of independent action. It was a feature of British security policy that Britain must have the United States as an ally, but also that it must be able to influence US policy and retain the maximum freedom for manoeuvre.

There was arguably therefore a central belief in the government, as Gowing puts it, 'that Britain as a great power must acquire all major new weapons', and that the A-bomb 'was manifestly the new passport to first-class military rank'.[42] During the stormy meeting of October 1946, it had been noted that 'Our prestige in the world...would...suffer if we did not exploit to the full a discovery in which we had played a leading part at the outset'.[43] This sometimes remained an instinct rather than a reasoned argument, so it is hard to assess its exact weight. But at that time and on subsequent occasions it was openly expressed. In 1950, the Chiefs of Staff recalled that the British had been moved to

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[40] Ian Clark and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The British Origins of Nuclear Strategy 1945-1955* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p. 5.
[41] PRO, CAB 130/16, GEN 16/1st, 8 January 1947.
[42] Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, pp. 184 and 63.
[43] PRO, CAB 130/2, GEN 75/15th, 25 October 1946.

pursue a determined atomic bomb programme by 'the need to exploit an invention of immense political and economic significance so that we could exert the proper influence of a Great Power in world affairs, both in peace and in any future war'.[44] Most publicly, Ernest Bevin told the House of Commons in May 1947 that the government did not accept

> that we have ceased to be a Great Power...We regard ourselves as one of the powers most vital to the peace of the world and we still have our historic part to play. The very fact that we have fought so hard for liberty, and paid such a price, warrants our retaining this position; and indeed it places a duty upon us to continue to retain it. I am not aware of any suggestion, seriously advanced, that by a sudden stroke of fate, as it were, we have overnight ceased to be a Great Power.[45]

Practical, realist security concerns also supported this position. Attlee declared later that the decision was founded on the need to insure against US isolationism. The decision was taken before the USA had made any commitment to European defence. The British could not safely rely on the Americans to come to their aid. Moreover, British faith in the Americans had been shaken by events in 1945 and 1946: the abrupt ending of Lend-Lease, for instance, and the severance of atomic energy collaboration by the McMahon Act. Thus for Attlee and his Foreign Secretary the decision to produce an atomic bomb was strongly influenced by considerations of British-US relations. Possession of atomic weapons would be a means of gaining influence over and respect from the USA if it was to be an ally, and a means of independent defence if not.

Political considerations therefore loomed large in the decision to produce the bomb. Military rationales, on the other hand, were accorded only the most superficial hearing during the January 1947 meeting of the GEN 163 committee. Portal informed the committee that he had spoken to the Chiefs of Staff - none of whom was present - and learned that they 'were naturally anxious that we should not be without this weapon if

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[44] PRO, DEFE 32/1, 'The United Kingdom Atomic Weapons Programme', Confidential Annex to COS (50) 26th mtg., 13 February 1950.
[45] Cited in Pierre, p. 68.

others possessed it'.[46] Perhaps, like much else, the military rationale for producing a bomb simply went without saying. It was so obvious that it seemed unnecessary to articulate it. Again, this makes it awkward to judge its relative importance. What then of the military aspects of the atomic bomb question? Long before the decision was taken to build a bomb - and this is further evidence that no one doubted that it would be built - the Chiefs of Staff were thinking about how to use it. Once the decision had been taken, and whatever the justifications for that decision, a strategy had to be worked out for the weapon. The ideas of the COS for the employment of the bomb are considered below.

To conclude, the British decision to go nuclear has received considerable attention in the literature, with various explanations advanced. Though not using the term strategic culture, some of these are in tune with the spirit of that approach. Margaret Gowing, in arguing that the atomic bomb decision just emerged from a body of assumptions, makes the case that beliefs about the international system and Britain's place in it, rather than reasoned analysis of British security objectives and options, shaped the decision. So an initial conclusion which can be drawn is that the analysis of British strategy is indeed sensitive to national peculiarities. Culture is certainly not ignored.

However, strategic culture is not drawn on explicitly nor applied systematically by existing accounts. There is a danger, noted in the political culture literature, that culture can become a residual variable, turned to when no other explanation suggests itself.[47] Those who turn implicitly to cultural arguments may be falling victim to this danger. Without hard documentary evidence of the reasons behind the atomic bomb decision, there may be a tendency to overstress cultural explanations, to use culture as an explanation of last resort. It can fill in the gaps in the documentary evidence by using inferred beliefs of decision-makers to explain their actions.

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[46] PRO, CAB 130/16, GEN 16/1st, 8 January 1947.

[47] See Ruth Lane, 'Political Culture: Residual Category or General Theory?', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (October 1992), p. 364.

While it is unsatisfactory to use culture *only* in such circumstances, as a last resort, it is still be instructive to look at its operation in this case. The thesis applies strategic culture more systematically to the 1947 decision than has been done hitherto. Other writers do not explicitly relate cultural arguments to possible alternative arguments. The thesis tries to do so. Waltz's point that the structure of the international system did not require a decision to acquire nuclear weapons weakens the case for structural causes. On two occasions, 'rational' arguments were put forward as to why Britain should not go ahead with its nuclear weapons programme. Blackett, Cripps and Dalton, 'rational men', were accorded short shrift. External constraints did act upon the British government, but internal beliefs about the nature of international politics and about Britain's Great Power status within it, did seem to inform government thinking and contribute significantly to the atomic bomb decision.

Strategic culture, it can be claimed, acted to close off other possible courses of action. The burden of proof lay with opponents of the decision. They struggled to make their voices heard when confronted with the powerful arguments of Ernest Bevin and others. Reference to Britain's Great Power status, to wrapping the atomic bomb in a Union Jack, conveyed strong meanings within the British elite. Overall, a strong case can be made that while strategic culture was not the cause of the decision, it did set a preference and make other options seem unattractive. Such debate as there was did not show the force of the best argument coming to the fore, as rational choice theory would suggest. Rather, arguments which struck a chord within British strategic culture carried most weight. In these ways strategic culture was significant. Moreover, the traditional British decision-making style also underlay the process by which the decision was taken. If it is not possible to quantify the importance of cultural factors in the 1947 decision, any analysis which excludes culture would surely lose much of its potential power.

The great deterrent

It was Sir John Slessor who gave currency to the phrase 'the great deterrent', a reference to the atomic weapon.[48] Slessor, as Chief of the Air Staff between 1950 and 1952, is usually credited with having been the driving force behind the famous Global Strategy Paper, a report by the British Chiefs of Staff on Defence Policy and Global Strategy submitted to the government in 1952. This is one of the most famous documents of post-war British defence policy, ironically achieving its fame, as is often the case, in part through having been censored. The more the government insisted that it should not be made public, the more important it was assumed to be. Finally, however, the Paper was released under the Waldegrave Initiative on open government. The 1952 Paper is credited with having given clear and explicit articulation to a strategy which had nuclear deterrence at its heart.[49] Along with the Overall Strategic Plan of 1947 and the Global Strategy Paper of 1950, also recently released, the evolution of this strategy can be traced.[50] That will be done before an attempt is made to examine the extent to which the strategy can be understood in terms of traditional British strategic culture.

The 1952 Paper must be understood within the context of the strategic situation as seen by the government in 1952. Returned to office in October 1951, Winston Churchill believed that defence policy needed to be reviewed. This was the case first of all because Britain's economic position had deteriorated to the point where savings in the defence budget were thought necessary. The rearmament programme initiated two years

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[48] See for example his collected essays: John Slessor, *The Great Deterrent* (London: Cassell, 1957).

[49] For a detailed discussion of the 1952 Global Strategy Paper, see John Baylis and Alan Macmillan, 'The British Global Strategy Paper of 1952', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (June 1993), pp. 200-26. A full version of the paper is contained in Alan Macmillan and John Baylis, *A Reassessment of the British Global Strategy Paper of 1952*, International Politics Research Paper No. 13 (Department of International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, in association with the Nuclear History Program, 1993).

[50] The Overall Strategic Plan, DO (47) 44, May 1947, was first published in Julian Lewis, *Changing Direction: British military Planning for Post-war Strategic Defence, 1942-1947* (London: Sherwood Press, 1988), pp. 370-87, and is also now published in John Baylis, *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942-1949* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 134-51. Hereafter references will be to the 1947 OSP. The 1950 Global Strategy Paper, DO (50) 45, Report by the Chiefs of Staff on 'Defence Policy and Global Strategy', 7 June 1950, was published in H.J. Yasamee and K.A. Hamilton, (eds), *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, Series II, Vol. IV, *Korea: June 1950-April 1951* (London: HMSO, 1991), pp. 411-31. Hereafter references will be to the 1950 GSP.

previously by the Attlee government during the emergency of the Korean War now represented too great a drain on resources.[51] At the same time, Churchill felt that insufficient account was being taken in British and Western defence policy of the value of nuclear weapons.[52] The Chiefs of Staff were therefore instructed to review British strategy. The 1952 Global Strategy Paper was the result of their deliberations.

In the 1952 Paper, the Chiefs of Staff stressed the need for a strategy which was sustainable economically, for a bankrupt Western Europe would offer the Soviet Union, identified as an implacable enemy, the chance of a 'bloodless victory'.[53] NATO, meanwhile, had agreed at Lisbon in February 1952 to increase substantially its conventional forces. The Chiefs saw this as financially unrealistic and were concerned that NATO was simultaneously paying comparatively little attention to nuclear forces. Their view was that 'the existence of the great atomic deterrent is of vital importance to humanity'.[54] More account had to be taken of this deterrent in British and NATO planning, for what would prevent war was 'the knowledge on the part of the Kremlin that any aggression on their part will involve immediate and crushing retaliation by the long-range Air Striking Force with the atomic weapon'.[55] The 'first essential' of allied policy had to be to establish and maintain this deterrent.[56]

This theme had been present in the thinking of the British defence establishment for some time. As Margaret Gowing writes, it became clear early in the atomic age to defence planners that 'the supreme object of British policy must be to prevent war, in particular by deterring aggression which might lead to war'.[57] In October 1945 the Chiefs of Staff expressed the view that, unless international control of atomic energy could be

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[51] See Clark and Wheeler, p. 156; and Richard N. Rosecrance, *Defence of the Realm: British Strategy in the Nuclear Epoch* (New York and London, Columbia University Press), p. 162.
[52] See Clark and Wheeler, p. 162; Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, p. 413; and Rosecrance, p. 158.
[53] 1952 GSP, paragraphs 2 and 13.
[54] *Ibid*, paragraph 41.
[55] *Ibid*, paragraph 37.
[56] *Ibid*, paragraph 36.
[57] Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, p. 187.

secured with 'the most unequivocal and comprehensive rights of inspection', then 'possession of atomic weapons of our own would be vital to our security'. The best method of defence against the new weapon is likely to be the deterrent effect that the possession of the means of retaliation would have on a potential aggressor'.[58] Subsequently, many similar formulations of this deterrent position were expressed by British military planners. Thus in January 1947 the Chiefs agreed that 'the only effective deterrent to a potential aggressor is tangible evidence of our intention and ability to withstand attack and to retaliate immediately'.[59] The 1947 Overall Strategic Plan, in which the Chiefs of Staff sought to bring together their defence thinking, similarly proposed a strategy not for fighting a war against the Soviet Union, but for preventing it.[60] Again, in June 1948, the Joint Planning Staff can be found arguing that 'the existence of a strong bomber force armed with weapons of mass destruction is...the most effective deterrent to war'.[61]

The British did not then possess any atomic weapons of their own, however, nor would they test their first device until 1952. But it was assumed that they would have the bomb soon, and before the Soviet Union. The Soviets proved that assumption wrong in 1949, testing their own bomb, and causing a certain amount of soul-searching in Britain. Just before the Soviet bomb test was known about, in September 1949, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir William Slim, suggested that the time had come to send the 1947 Overall Strategic Plan back to the Joint Planning Staff for redrafting.[62] Though not responsible for this redrafting exercise, out of which came the 1950 Global Strategy Paper, the Soviet atomic test cast a long shadow over it. What Margaret Gowing describes as 'the most shattering moment of truth for Britain in the early post-war years', followed within a few months by the unmasking of the atomic spy Klaus Fuchs, led the

[58] PRO, PREM 8/116, Hollis to PM, 10 October 1945.
[59] PRO, DEFE 4/1, COS (47) 4th, 6 January 1947.
[60] 1947 OSP, paragraph 33(a).
[61] PRO, DEFE 4/14, JP (48) 63 (Revised Final), 26 June 1948.
[62] PRO, DEFE 5/16, COS (49) 298, Note by the CIGS, 12 September 1949.

Chiefs of Staff to question seriously the place of atomic weapons in their strategy.[63]

The prospect of the Soviets deploying atomic weapons long before the British fed into a debate on the relative priority of defence research and development, and that for atomic energy. In May 1949 the Chiefs of Staff had concluded that it remained essential that production of atomic energy and weapons should have overriding priority. Research and development of the bomb and of its means of delivery on the other hand had to be considered alongside other vital research and development projects, but the needs of the bomb were to be met unless the other projects were gravely imperilled.[64] In February 1950, in the wake of the Fuchs arrest, the Chiefs of Staff again considered their position on atomic weapons production.[65] Thus the background to the 1950 defence review was marked by a crisis of British confidence in atomic weapons and their place in defence policy, and the Paper reflected that. Although it set great store by the importance of the Western atomic deterrent, it also emphasised the need for an efficient air defence system to protect a Britain made vulnerable to Soviet atomic attack unexpectedly early. The Chiefs also warned that atomic weapons could not be seen as an 'easy short cut to victory'.[66] In the 1952 Paper, defence against atomic attack was not considered realistic, and deterrence was re-emphasised.[67] The 1950 Paper therefore appears as a slightly less confident statement of belief on deterrence from that seen earlier and later. But the importance of an atomic deterrent was asserted by British military planners from 1945 onwards.

What led Britain to adopt this great deterrent strategy? A number of aspects of the British historical experience can be identified which arguably shaped British thinking on the matter.

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[63] Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, p. 4.
[64] *Ibid*, p. 227.
[65] PRO, DEFE 32/1, Memo from Sir William Elliot to the COS, 10 February 1950.
[66] 1950 GSP, paragraphs 13(c), 18 and 58.
[67] 1952 GSP, paragraph 12.

(1) *Strategic Air Power*

In his book *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell notes that the engagements at Verdun, the Somme and elsewhere were termed 'battles' 'by subsequent historiography in the interest of neatness and the assumption of something like a rational causality'. These were not battles in the same sense as Blenheim or Waterloo: decisive set-piece engagements of troops. To characterise them as such 'was to imply an understandable continuity with earlier British history and to imply that the war makes sense in a traditional way'. It was also 'to try to suggest that these events parallel Blenheim and Waterloo not only in glory but in structure and meaning'.[68] Continuity in military language therefore masks changes in the nature and meaning of warfare and suggests that it can be understood and prosecuted as before.

Similarly, to talk of atomic 'bombs' and nuclear 'weapons' is to imply continuity with the past and suggest that these devices can be rational policy instruments in the same way as traditional arms, and that they can be fitted into existing strategies. Many modern analysts see nuclear strategy and nuclear weapons as contradictions, believing that there can be no rational use of nuclear devices in the Clausewitzian sense. But while some talked of the revolutionary change brought about by nuclear weapons, others could still conceive of them in traditional terms. The obvious frame of reference within which atomic bombs could be conceived was strategic air power. The history of thinking on this subject was one of a number of factors which combined to shape the military policy devised by the British Chiefs of Staff with regard to the atomic bomb.

The British took strategic air power very seriously. Thinking about it had been influential in the interwar period, and strategic bombing had been extensively practised during the war. If air power in the Second World War had not proved to be the decisive weapon that had at first been feared, it seemed set to fulfil its promise once it had been allied to the atomic bomb. An atomic air offensive looked certain to be a truly devastating

[68] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 8-9.

form of attack, and was always likely to assume a central position in British defence planning since, as Mark Venables contends, Britain was better suited than any other nation to embrace it: British air power theory was the most refined and influential, and stressed the primacy of the independent bomber formation, a central feature of the atomic air strike.[69]

The atomic air offensive was all the more important because the most likely enemy which Britain would face was the Soviet Union. Addressing the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1953, Sir John Slessor spelled out the options open to Britain in a war with the Soviets. A land invasion of the USSR would be an impossible undertaking, and the traditional British policy of naval blockade would be ineffective. Against such a vast, autarkic land power as the Soviet Union, 'it would be the bomber alone that would bring pressure to bear upon the enemy'.[70] But the bomber would have great difficulty in bringing significant pressure to bear on the Soviet Union unless used in conjunction with the atomic bomb. The new weapon would permit a markedly smaller attacking force, which would be within the means of the United Kingdom. The Joint Planning Staff observed in June 1948 that the strategic bomber offensive using weapons of mass destruction was 'the best method of bringing early pressure to bear on the enemy'.[71]

(2) *Vulnerability*

A feeling of unique vulnerability gripped British policy makers in the atomic age. That Britain was considered peculiarly vulnerable to atomic air attack, much more so than the Soviet Union and the United States, is apparent from documents emanating from the Foreign Office, the Advisory Committee on Atomic Energy, the Imperial Defence College, the Joint Planning Staff, the Chiefs of Staff and the Prime Minister himself.[72]

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[69] Venables, p. 8.

[70] Slessor, p. 127.

[71] PRO, DEFE 4/14, JP (48) 63 (Revised Final), 26 June 1948, in COS (48) 90th, 30 June 1948, Annex.

[72] PRO, PREM 8/117, ACAE (45) 11, FO memo on international background to atomic energy, 11 September 1945; CAB 134/6, ACAE (45) 2nd, 20 September 1945; DEFE 4/1, COS (47) 1st, Confidential Annex, 'Imperial Defence College - General Policy', 1 January 1947; CAB 84/79, JP (46) 36 (Final), JPS

Many of these records date from the period shortly after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki explosions and demonstrate a pervasive and strongly held perception within the British government that, as a Foreign Office memorandum put it,

> the new discovery makes the United Kingdom infinitely more vulnerable than ever before, both absolutely and as compared with larger and more centrally placed countries.[73]

This vulnerability was a function both of geography and of demography: Britain was closer to the Soviet Union than was the United States, and its industry and population were much more highly concentrated than those of the Soviet Union or the United States. Moreover, the prospects of an effective defence against an atomic air attack seemed dim. It was felt that it required only a few bombs to hit their targets to devastate the United Kingdom.

Mark Venables notes that Britain had been the first great power to face the problem of defence against air attack.[74] If the British were keenly aware of the damage which they could inflict upon others with an atomic air offensive, they were even more painfully aware of the damage which could be inflicted upon themselves by the same means. Nor did they see any effective defence against atomic attack, given the damage which could be caused by only a small number of aircraft armed with atomic weapons. The Deputy Chiefs of Staff Committee on Atomic Weapons advised as early as January 1946 that Britain now 'must count the bombs that get through rather than the aircraft shot down'.[75] Around 1949-50, they debated giving more stress to defence, but by the time of the 1952 Global Strategy Paper they had given up on defending against atomic attack.[76]

Report, 27 February 1946; CAB 131/2, DO (46) 47, 'Strategic Position of the British Commonwealth', 2 April 1946; CAB 130/2, GEN 75/7th, 1 November 1945.

[73] PRO, PREM 8/117, ACAE (45) 11, FO memo on international background to atomic energy, 11 September 1945.

[74] Venables, p. 8.

[75] See for example PRO, CAB 82/26, DCOS (AWC) (46) 1, 30 January 1946, Annex, Joint Technical Warfare Committee Report.

[76] The 1950 GSP, paragraphs 13(c) and 58, supports the need for air defence, while the 1952 GSP, paragraph 12, argues that it cannot be effective.

Their feeling of acute vulnerability concentrated the minds of British strategists, who felt that Britain had its back pushed against the wall. In this respect the British experience was significantly different from that of the United States, cushioned by its distance from the Soviet Union and not perceiving itself to be vulnerable to atomic attack for several years to come. Right from the start of the post-war era the British were very well aware of the weakness of their position, and this awareness was perhaps the most significant factor in the development of British strategic thinking in the early post-war years.

That the British should have been so anxious about their vulnerability so early on is remarkable. The Soviet Union did not then possess atomic weapons, and was not expected to do so in the immediate future (and certainly not before Britain itself). With the United States in sole possession of atomic weapons, the British might have been expected to take a more positive outlook, and perhaps to see the bomb as a means of containing or even pushing back the Soviet Union. Yet instead of focusing on the present and looking to make the most of the Western head start, the British planners concentrated on a future Soviet threat, and attempted to come up with a strategy to counter Soviet atomic weapons and to minimise the threat of Soviet atomic attack. This negative thinking may be a measure of the depth of the concern felt by the British about their vulnerability to atomic attack, but it is curious that they should be so exercised by what was nevertheless only a potential vulnerability. The explanation perhaps lies in British strategic culture, for set against a long history of relative invulnerability, the new vulnerability of the atomic age was arguably a greater shock to the system than for other continental countries. Britons until the early part of the twentieth century could assume that the United Kingdom itself would be left untouched by the ravages of war. The advent of air power undermined that assumption and caused panic in the 1930s, and during the war the British had a taste of what air attack meant. Even though Britain suffered relatively little during the war, the damage done was far more extensive than hitherto.

Britain's special vulnerability to atomic attack was a function of geography and demography. These are factors particular to the United Kingdom, but not cultural factors. As a result of the perception that they stood to lose most from an atomic war, the British began to articulate from very early on a policy of deterrence. War prevention was seen as crucial. But it could be argued that the novelty of British vulnerability to destruction in war gave it particular poignancy.

(3) *Deterrence versus appeasement*

It is important to make the distinction here between preventing and avoiding war, a distinction all too clear to those making policy at this time. For much of the 1930s war had been avoided through appeasement, but in the late 1940s the opposite of that policy was being considered. The British were intent on preventing war, but without surrendering their foreign policy interests to the USSR. A survey by the Imperial Defence College observed that 'any attempt at a policy of appeasement to Russia is more likely to provoke war'.[77] Rather, a firm policy was required. Deterrence, the British realised, was as much a matter of foreign policy as of defence or military policy, and could not be guaranteed through the mere possession of atomic weapons. It required also a resolute foreign policy, the reverse of 1930s style appeasement.

In the previous chapter, Paul Kennedy's argument that appeasement had been a British policy since the middle of the nineteenth century was considered. Avoiding conflicts was important for an overstretched power in relative decline. The events of the 1930s, however, turned appeasement into a discredited policy. Sir John Slessor, architect of the 1952 Global Strategy Paper, described the 1938 Munich crisis as the 'worst period of my life'.[78] For many others who had lived through it also, Munich came to symbolise

[77] PRO, DEFE 4/1, COS (47) 1st, 1 January 1947, Confidential Annex, Imperial Defence College - General Policy'.

[78] Slessor applies a similar description to the 1944 Warsaw uprising. See John Slessor, *The Central Blue: Recollections and Reflections* (London: Cassell, 1956), pp. 217 and 612.

cowardly and ultimately self-defeating retreat in the face of aggression. It led Slessor to distinguish war prevention and war avoidance. Trying to avoid war through appeasement would mean sacrificing vital foreign policy interests and would not ultimately halt a determined aggressor. Trying to prevent war through a strong foreign policy which made clear that Britain was willing to fight rather than jettison important interests would deter an enemy and so prevent war.[79]

The analogy with Munich is a frequently encountered one, and seems to have shaped Cold War thinking and policy in the United States and Britain. In mounting the Berlin air lift, the defence of South Korea and other Cold War landmarks, the example of Hitler may have been in many minds. Yet there are many difficulties with reasoning by analogy, which is often a shorthand approach. Chiefly the question is whether the Soviet Union in the 1940s and 1950s presented the same threat as Hitler in the 1930s. If not, then the analogy is inappropriate. It does not appear however that very much analysis went into determining this. It was easy to assume that Stalin equated with Hitler and that he had to be dealt with in much the same way. This may or may not have been correct. But the case can be made that the deterrence strategy adopted by Britain was a case of fighting the last peace again. The shock of the perceived failure of the interwar policy caused a reverse to a much harder line, a climate of thinking in which toughness met with approval and suggestions of accommodation would be dismissed, with a reminder of what had occurred in the 1930s.

(4) *Continental commitment versus maritime strategy*

There was a measure of continuity in British strategy with previous thinking in the entrusting of the RAF with primary responsibility for national defence. In the past it had been the Royal Navy which had enjoyed this responsibility, as it was required to defend Britain from invasion. Only a small army was required, and the same was true after the

[79] John Slessor, *Strategy for the West* (London: Cassell, 1954), p. 7.

Second World War, with one service again assuming the main burden.

The atomic airborne deterrent strategy also fits in to the traditional debate about the continental commitment versus the maritime strategy, discussed in the previous chapter. In the 1952 Global Strategy Paper the British were protesting against the NATO policy of preparing large scale conventional defences, and looking to cut their own conventional forces. Reliance on the atomic deterrent allowed the British to maintain low levels of conventional forces in the army, as they traditionally had. This time it was the Air Force and not the Navy which would bear the brunt of national defence. The armed forces of allies could be relied upon to mount the conventional defence of Europe. In war too, the airborne atomic offensive has been seen as a small conceptual step from the naval blockade - a means of avoiding direct military confrontations between armies on the battlefield, by attacking the heart of the enemy. Obviously, however, an atomic air offensive offered a more direct and immediate attack on the enemy's economic strength than the blockade.

In conclusion, post-war British strategy embodied strong continuity with the past. Even to the extent that atomic weapons were seen as revolutionary, and switching the emphasis from defence to deterrence, they were still conceptualised as weapons to be integrated into existing strategies. Once again, the strategy developed by the British to meet the threats of the nuclear age can be understood not as the obvious response of the notional 'rational strategic man', who is not rooted in the history and culture of any particular state, but as the response of British decision-makers with a particular strategic past. The effect of Munich was strongly felt, and reference to it a powerful argument for a deterrent strategy. Previous experience with bomber aircraft and a pre-existing sense of peculiar vulnerability gave the deterrent strategy an appeal to decision-makers. It fitted into the continental commitment versus maritime strategy dialectic. Defence dilemmas continued to be understood in similar terms to the past. A full understanding of British grand strategy and post-war defence debates requires comprehension of the past.

Whether our notional 'rational strategic man' would have reached the same strategic conclusions and developed a similar strategy, is impossible to say. In their work, Clark and Wheeler attempt to argue that British policy differed in important respects from that of the United States, reflecting different national experiences and needs.[80] In the end, however, the similarities seem more striking than the differences. But the United States, as a sea-going power with a history of naval then air power, and a debate between isolation from and involvement in European security affairs, in many ways resembles Britain, or, put differently, the two states are likely to share certain features of strategic culture. The comparison with the United States may not be the best to draw, though in the time frame being considered the only other state to acquire nuclear weapons was the Soviet Union, and that towards the end of the period. More studies are required to make possible comparisons with other states.

The complementary deterrent

The atomic weapon may have had pride of place in the 1952 Global Strategy Paper, but it was not seen as the solution to all problems. Land and air forces at a high state of readiness in Western Europe would complement the atomic deterrent, it was believed. If these forces were at a sufficiently high level the Soviets would see that any advance across Western Europe would be slow and difficult. This should deter them from aggression and also, should deterrence fail, give time for the atomic air offensive to take effect. The emphasis on conventional forces has not been fully acknowledged by secondary accounts of the 1952 Paper, but is evident now that it has been declassified. NATO conventional forces were not currently adequate, the Chiefs noted, but they had little to say on how improvements could be achieved, a particularly poignant omission given that Britain was looking in the Paper to cut its own conventional contribution to the Alliance.[81]

[80] Clark and Wheeler, especially pp. 3-4.
[81] 1952 GSP, paragraphs 39-40.

A debate over the British contribution to continental defence had been going on for some years. Indeed, this forms part of a debate which has dominated much of post-war British politics. Should Britain commit itself to Europe? This debate appears to have its roots in British history and obviously geography, as a country detached from mainland Europe, with a history of independence and global interests, adjusts to a diminished status. It has been argued that a particular understanding of sovereignty, seen in very formal terms, gets in the way of British co-operation in Europe.[82] So too the debate on whether to commit troops to continental defence is therefore not a narrow strategic one, but rather a debate deeply rooted in British culture and linked to much broader concerns than military effectiveness. It is linked also to the traditional British debate on the continental commitment versus a maritime strategy.

In the early post-war years, the British had not been thinking in terms of committing troops to continental defence. The Overall Strategic Plan of 1947 had paid little attention to the defence of Western Europe, focusing rather on the defence of the Middle East and the United Kingdom itself:

> The primary task of the Army, apart from the manning of anti-aircraft defences and readiness to aid civil power in the United Kingdom, will be to ensure the security of our Middle East base. Despite the possible risk of invasion of United Kingdom by air we consider the provision of forces to meet our requirements in the Middle East must be given priority over the anti-invasion role in the United Kingdom.[83]

Middle East defence, the defence of the United Kingdom and its development as an offensive base, and the control of essential sea communications, were defined as the three pillars of British strategy. The collapse of any one of them would, it was asserted, bring down the whole structure of Commonwealth defence.

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[82] See Jim Buller, 'Britain as an Awkward Partner', *Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (February 1995), pp. 40-41.
[83] 1947 OSP, paragraph 47 (e).

By 1948, the defence of Western Europe had gained some ground in COS thinking. With the signing of the Brussels Treaty, the Berlin blockade and talks on the forming of an Atlantic alliance acting on their minds, the Chiefs had added to their plans the need to defend Europe as far east as possible, but thought in terms of committing British naval and air, rather than land, forces to this end. In that year, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Montgomery, was trying to persuade his fellow chiefs of staff that Britain must commit land forces to the defence of Europe: two divisions initially. The Navy and Air Force chiefs opposed the expense of resources on this when the navy and air force needed first call on funds. For the former, committing troops to the continent was also to be opposed as contrary to traditional British strategy. He argued that

> It had been our traditional policy in the past to avoid Continental Commitments. Twice in the past we had given a guarantee to assist a Continental nation to the limit of our power by the provision of land forces. On both occasions we had suffered severely, first at Mons and then more recently at Dunkirk.[84]

This was not an argument that directly addressed the issue at hand, but one that drew on widely shared beliefs about the dangers of continental commitments. The emotive terms Dunkirk and Mons were brought in to add strength to the position, though whether the situation during the First and Second World Wars was analogous to the post-war situation was not tested.

This was a debate which rumbled on over the following years without any clear resolution. By the early part of 1950, the Chiefs of Staff were again deliberating on the sort of contribution that the United Kingdom should make to the conventional defence of Western Europe. The Joint Planning Staff had argued that a solid commitment of ground forces should be made to continental defence, on the grounds that

> It had become of vital importance for the survival of the United Kingdom that the enemy should be held no further west that the line of the Rhine.[85]

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[84] PRO, DEFE 4/10, COS (48) 18th meeting, 4 February 1948.
[85] PRO, DEFE 4/29, Confidential Annex to COS (50) 37th, 8 March 1950.

Before going on to examine the decision actually taken by the Chiefs of Staff on this question in their 1950 review of strategy, it is worth considering what had brought about this new evaluation of the importance of the defence of Western Europe. The JPS pointed to one source with their assertion that

> The lead possessed by the United States in stockpiling atomic bombs would, on account of the early possession of this weapon by the Russians, lose much of its deterrent effect sooner than had been anticipated.[86]

So again it was the Soviet atomic test which was at the centre of rethinking on defence policy. The JPS exhibited some loss of faith in deterrence in the light of the ending of the US atomic monopoly. And, if deterrence had been weakened, then war was now more likely, and in the event of the Soviet Union overrunning Europe,

> there was now no reason to suppose that the United Kingdom could survive for long the weight of attack that could be brought to bear by the Russians in possession of the Channel coast.[87]

Presumably, though it is not stated clearly, the JPS was motivated by the fear that the Soviets would be able now to deliver atomic weapons by short range rocket from across the Channel, against which defence would be close to impossible. Thus the Soviet atomic explosion affected the Chiefs of Staff's thinking on European defence as well as on the place on atomic weapons in British strategy.

The Chiefs of Staff accepted this argument. It became a central part of their defence review. The new CIGS, Slim, observed in May 1950 that while there had been no fundamental change in defence policy, a most important move had been made on the relative importance of Western Europe and the Middle East.

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[86] *Ibid.*
[87] *Ibid.*

> In the past we have been prepared to contemplate the overrunning of Western Europe on the grounds that it would be possible for Britain and the United States to fight back from bases in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. The Chiefs of Staff now considered that the defence of Western Europe must form part of the defence of the United Kingdom.[88]

Yet even though the British here assigned new priority to the defence of Western Europe, by 1952 they were looking to limit their commitment. This sort of half-hearted, reluctant commitment reflects a history of seeking to avoid commitment, and can be seen in modern times when, even although Britain commits itself to various aspects of European integration, it so often manages to convey an impression of reluctance which leaves no Europeans convinced of its intentions.

To conclude, in looking at the place of conventional forces in British post-war strategy, we see a continuation of past debates, and a tendency also to frame arguments in terms of historical practice and debates. Reluctance on the part of many to countenance a continental commitment of forces persisted, while for others it was essential. As mentioned before, in the recent revised edition of his well-known book on the subject, *The Continental Commitment*, Michael Howard observed that, with hindsight, his advocacy of a commitment of forces to continental Europe was more influenced by the experiences of his own generation than he realised at the time. Having lived through the interwar years he felt that such a commitment was necessary to prevent a recurrence of the events of the 1930s and appeasement. For earlier generations, such as that of Liddell Hart, importance was attached to avoiding continental commitments which were seen as leading to the disaster of the First World War. New generations may see the debate in different lights, but both continued to see it in terms of an either/or situation: a continental commitment versus a maritime (or airborne) strategy.[89]

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[88] PRO, DEFE 4/31, COS (50) 74th, 11 May 1950.

[89] Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The dilemma of British defence Policy in the era of the two world wars* (London: Ashfield Press, 1989: first published 1972), p. 8.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter has not been to prove conclusively the importance of strategic culture, to demonstrate how it operates in all circumstances, or to measure precisely its explanatory strength. To do so, if indeed it is possible at all, would require far more extensive and comparative case studies. Rather, the aim has been to suggest how consideration of strategic cultural factors in some key areas of post-war British defence policy can further our understanding of that policy and the debates which produced it. Accounts which left out the cultural factors discussed here would be far less rich and would miss much of what was going on.

With regard the decision taken by the British government to acquire its own atomic weapons, the argument here is that it was not made inevitable by the nature of the international system nor by the international circumstances in which British decision-makers found themselves at the time the decision was taken. Other options were possible and reasoned cases against the decision were advanced on at least two occasions. However, there was little debate and 'rational' consideration of the crucial political, military and economic issues. Those who sought to initiate debate from a critical point of view were not met head on but dismissed and isolated from the decision-making process. Documents here provide little guidance as to the thoughts of the decision-makers and rational analysis of the goals they wanted to attain and the policy options for attaining them. Understanding of British strategic culture here can help to fill in the blanks of the documentary record and to grasp the meaning of those documents. The danger does exist that strategic culture becomes in these circumstances an explanatory tool of the last resort. However, were all the documents available, strategic culture could still be important, to draw out the meaning of the documents.

In the atomic bomb decision at least, strategic culture surely has a part. The lack of open, rational analysis of the military value of the bomb and of its affordability suggests that the decision was rooted in deeper beliefs and assumptions. Gowing

describes the decision as an 'instinctive response' and a 'reflex action' to underline this argument.[90] The British self-perception as a Great Power does seem to have been an important factor in the atomic bomb decision, rendering the option of forgoing the acquisition of the bomb unpalatable and placing the burden of proof on those who would relinquish atomic power rather than those would obtain it. The preferred option, suggested by the strategic culture, was to join the atomic club. Writers such as Clark and Wheeler are right to draw attention to the effort made within the defence establishment to develop strategic rationales for the bomb from 1945 onwards.[91] Yet the driving force behind the decision appears to be rooted more in the British self-image as a Great Power than in reasoned strategic responses to perceived threats.

The strategic culture approach thus leads to conclusions similar to those reached by Gowing, Groom and Pierre.[92] However, by linking these conclusions to the detailed profile of British strategic culture, it gives more substance to their insights through the fuller exposition of British historical experience. Also, by relating the cultural explanation to other possibilities, the above analysis draws more attention to the relative role of culture. Finally, it is important to make clear the ways in which strategic culture functioned. Recalling the possibilities discussed in Chapter Four, strategic culture set preferences for decision-makers. It also had an instrumental role, for reference to key cultural beliefs served to produce a powerful argument. Finally, the strategic culture approach shows the meaning which this action had to decision-makers. If human beings are suspended in webs of meaning they themselves have spun, understanding of British strategic culture gives access to that meaning.

At another level, perceptions of the external environment as a threatening one in which all states need to take measures to ensure their own security also cautioned against abstaining from acquiring a weapon which other might subsequently decide to deploy,

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[90] Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, pp. 63 and 209-10.
[91] Clark and Wheeler, p. 5.
[92] *Ibid*, p. 184; Groom, p. 23; and Pierre, p. 303.

though, as Waltz warns, it need not necessarily have led Britain to developing its own bomb. This perception could be explained through a neo-realist analysis of the nature of the international system. However, the strategic culture approach offers a rival explanation. It roots this perception in Britain's long historical experience of conflict and war. Neo-realists might argue that all states operate according to the dictates of the self-help system of international anarchy, and Britain is not unusual. Nevertheless, it is worth historicising this perception, and stressing the effect of national experience in creating it. This opens up the possibility at least that different national experience could give rise to a different view than neo-realism provides. On the basis of the analysis here, this must remain a speculative point, however.

In terms of decision-making styles, it can be argued that the process by which the British government reached their decision to acquire an atomic weapon was consistent with traditional practices. International circumstances also dovetailed neatly with the traditional style, suggesting the need to avoid immediate and irrevocable public commitments. There were many reasons to take the atomic bomb decision in secret, and to put off for as long as possible a decision at all. Explanations of the decision employing models of decision-making which do not look at these traditional practices lack the dimension of national specifity.[93]

The British deterrent policy similarly has roots in British history and experience. The development of strategic air power, the experience of Munich, the traditional debate between the continental commitment and the maritime strategy and the novelty of British vulnerability to attack provide the context in which the deterrent strategy was developed. These factors, along with the above noted perceptions of the external environment, created predispositions toward a strategic air offensive as a deterrent. Whether alone they would have been sufficient to determine policy is a difficult question to answer. The

[93] For a decision-making analysis which has little to say on British particularity, see Peter James Anderson, *The Consolidation of Selected Approaches to the Study of Foreign Policy: A theoretical and empirical analysis* (PhD Thesis, University of Southampton, 1987).

power of atomic weapons does perhaps have implications which cross national boundaries, suggesting that deterrence rather than defence is the best strategy. Yet strategic culture can be argued to have underlain the deterrent policy.

The debate over whether Britain needed to commit itself to continental defence was also conducted in familiar terms. The question of whether Britain should opt for a continental commitment or a maritime strategy was a traditional one, often seen in either/or terms. Contemporary circumstances and the experiences of different generations could affect which way the debate went at any particular time, but the same question was posed. The debate can be better understood in the context of the Britain strategic traditions, and these traditions, or versions of them, could be brought into the debate. Asserting that one or other option was the traditional strategy was a strong means of arguing the case. Tradition then could be manipulated as part of the debate. The fact that Britain committed itself to the defence of continental Europe can be explained perhaps by strategic circumstances; the reluctance with which it did so can best be understood in the light of British strategic culture. Effective argument must be based not just on being 'right', but on mastery of the relevant 'language game', as Dillon, drawing on Wittgenstein, puts it.[94]

This chapter does not offer a revolutionary account of British strategic choices in the immediate post-war period. However, it has sought to show that strategic culture analysis can in many respects enrich our understanding of British strategic policy. Many writers on British strategic policy after the war, among them Gowing, and Clark and Wheeler, implicitly have recourse to strategic cultural arguments. Strategic culture so far has rarely been mentioned explicitly.[95] The phrase 'strategic culture' itself arose in a particular environment, within the strategic studies community in the United States

[94] G. M. Dillon, 'Britain', in Dillon, *Defence Policy Making: A Comparative Analysis* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), p. 40.
[95] The exception is John Baylis, in *Ambiguity and Deterrence*; and in *British Defence Policy: Striking the Right Balance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989).

during the Cold War. It was a reaction against an acultural and ahistorical style of analysis which assumed a universal strategic rationality. In the United Kingdom, however, there has been less of a tendency to make this assumption. More attention has been paid to national particularities. One commentator notes that US nuclear strategy had a timeless feel to it. If now that the Cold War has ended it seems that, to the contrary, US strategic analysis was deeply rooted in a particular time and place, nevertheless it did aim for timelessness and universal applicability. British thinking about nuclear weapons, however, seems to have had in mind the particular British situation.[96] It is common to read analyses of British defence policy in this period which make reference to the legacy of the past, to history and tradition as important factors in shaping policy. Though not self-consciously strategic culture analysis, this draws on the same themes. Frequent reference to the past is indeed part of British culture. What British strategic writing needs is perhaps less to be made aware of strategic cultural factors, than to discuss them more reflexively. In the British context, strategic culture does not explain or enhance our understanding of everything. No one would expect it to do so. However, it is surely too important to ignore.

[96] John C. Garnett, 'British Strategic Thought', in John Baylis, (ed), *British Defence Policy in a Changing World* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 162-63.

Conclusion:

Strategic Culture and the Cultural Turn in International Politics

Culture is a difficult word. It has been described as 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language'.[1] However, unlike other words denoting complicated concepts, for instance ontology, culture is not the restricted preserve of academic experts. It is a word everyone encounters frequently and employs often. Fazed by unfamiliar foreign customs, tourists pronounce themselves 'culture shocked'. Justifying state funding for money-losing *avant garde* operas and ancient dramas, artists present them as cultural events which must be sustained. Defending practices such as female circumcision which many people regard as torture, the practitioners call them culture.[2] From C.P. Snow's *The Two Cultures* to Robert Hughes' *The Culture of Complaint*, commentators on modes of thinking and contemporary climates of opinion have recourse to this multi-purpose word.[3]

Culture has proved to be a very useful word indeed. Its elasticity underpins its seductive appeal, for it can be stretched to include all sorts of phenomena. Field Marshal Lord Raglan observed that culture is 'roughly everything that humans do and monkeys

[1] R.B.J. Walker, 'The Concept of Culture in the Theory of International Relations', in Jongsuk Chay, (ed), *Culture and International Relations* (New York, Westport CONN and London: Praeger, 1990), p. 4.
[2] On culture as an excuse for torture, see Ken Booth, 'Dare not to Know: International Relations Theory versus the Future', in Ken Booth and Steve Smith, (eds), *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), p. 342.
[3] C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964); and Robert Hughes, *The Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* (London: HarperCollins, revised edition, 1994).

don't'.[4] It gives licence to explore phenomena which do not fit into other explanatory schemes. For example, it opens up for investigation what Michael Howard refers to as the 'shadowy regions' of strategy. As noted in the 'Introduction' to the thesis, Howard argues that

> it is in those shadowy regions of human understanding based on our knowledge of social development, cultural diversity and patterns of behaviour that we have to look for the answers.[5]

Culture is also an exasperating word. Defining it is like nailing jelly to a wall. To invoke this term is to open a Pandora's box of methodological conundrums. The 'Introduction' ended by quoting Clifford Geertz, the anthropologist who has done much to popularise the study of culture beyond his own discipline. Even for Geertz, this remains a frustrating field of study:

> Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is. It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right.[6]

Culture tends not to offer neat, Newtonian connections between actions and reactions, causes and effects. For some, however, the world does not operate in a Newtonian fashion, and therefore means of studying it should not presume that it does. The simplest possible theory may be our aim, as William McGuire puts it, 'if we are seeking to describe a pretzel-shaped reality, we must be allowed to use pretzel-shaped hypotheses'.[7]

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[4] Cited in Patrick Mileham, *Ethos: British Army Officership 1962-1992* (The Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, Occasional Paper No. 19, 1996), p. 29.
[5] Michael Howard, 'The Future of Deterrence', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Vol. 131, No. 2 (June 1986), p. 10.
[6] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana, 1993), p. 29.
[7] Cited in Deborah Welch Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 23.

Culture is, for others, a dangerous word. 'When I hear the word "culture" I slip back the safety catch of my revolver', as Hermann Göring is often believed to have said. For different reasons, many others would agree. Culture, they would argue, can be drafted in to lend weight and authority to the commonplace and intellectual credibility to the spurious. It is hard to build cumulative, falsifiable knowledge on cultural foundations. While it may be an acceptable concept for everyday use and journalistic commentaries, it has no place in the more rigorous academic discourse. For Jack Snyder, whose coinage of the term 'strategic culture' has spawned a small academic literature, culture is a last resort turned to where more direct, satisfying linkages of cause and effect cannot be found.[8]

Cultural analysis is problematic. It has its adherents who believe that, for all the problems, it remains important because it taps into a significant aspect of human life. Searching the 'shadowy regions' may be more awkward than looking where there is light, but the potential rewards are greater and worth pursuing even if there is more chance of losing your way or failing to find what you are looking for. If we ignore culture, 'we are no more than top-of-the-water adventurers who limit our opinions of the icebergs to what we can see'.[9] On the other hand, there will also be detractors who believe that the game is not worth the candle. The time and effort required to search the 'shadowy regions' or to move beyond the tip of the iceberg, will not, for them, justify the possible results. It is better to comment with certainty on a limited range of phenomena than to offer less secure opinions on more tricky phenomena.

It is in this context that the conclusions of this thesis should be judged. It does not resolve all the problems which bedevil cultural analysis. Far from it: this sort of analysis has inherent difficulties of which we must be aware and which can be mitigated, but these difficulties cannot completely be overcome. However, the thesis tries to make the case for studying strategic culture in spite of the difficulties involved. In the 'Introduction', a

[8] Jack Snyder, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor', in Carl G. Jacobsen, (ed), *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 4.
[9] John Irving, *Trying to Save Piggy Sneed* (London: Corgi, 1994), p. 152.

number of purposes were laid out. The intention was to survey the small but growing literature on strategic culture; to gather together and describe as much as possible of that literature; to identify some of its main strengths and weaknesses; and to locate it within the field of strategic studies. That done, the aim was to add some 'theoretical shine' to the concept by examining a related literature to which some reference is made in strategic culture writing: the political culture literature. That literature, it was hoped, would be of assistance in identifying the dangers and opportunities of cultural analysis, and determining how best to proceed with the study of strategic culture. The next part of the project involved adding 'empirical flesh' to strategic culture studies by first drawing up a profile of the salient features of British strategic culture and then asking to what extent this could aid our comprehension of some crucial choices in British grand strategy between 1945 and 1952, an important period in British strategic history. This 'conclusion' will proceed by summarising the findings of the thesis. It will finally offer some thoughts on what needs to be done to develop further the concept of strategic culture. One suggestion will be that it needs to be opened up to the wider realm of ideas in International Politics and beyond.[10] The thesis has considered strategic culture from the point of view of a strategic studies specialist. It turned to the political culture literature for assistance. However, it will be argued that by opening the subject up to ideas about culture or related concepts currently being developed in the social sciences, much more progress may be made.

Strategic culture

On the basis of Chapters One to Four, what conclusions can be drawn about the concept of strategic culture? Chapters One and Two together constitute a sociology of knowledge, charting the origins and growth of the concept of strategic culture in the spirit of the maxim of Descartes that it is easier to understand something when you have watched it grow than when you look on it fully formed. The term 'strategic culture' itself was coined

[10] I will use the capitalized form, International Politics, to refer to the academic subject or discipline rather than to relations between states.

because of a perceived neglect of historical and cultural factors in the strategic studies literature produced largely in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. However, Chapter One made the point that this neglect did not characterise all writing about strategy. It is possible to find many writers on strategy who speak to cultural concerns, even if they do not use the term 'strategic culture' itself. Indeed, some have overemphasised the distinctiveness of national strategic cultures or ways in warfare. At times culture has been overlooked, then, and at times overdrawn. At times also it has been done badly, distinguished by reliance upon crude stereotypes. Nevertheless, many academics and journalists have taken the view that national particularities exist and play an important role in making sense of strategic behaviour. There is an intuitive appeal to the concept, which, if it does not automatically confer academic respectability upon it, at least suggests that it warrants further investigation.

The body of writing focused explicitly upon strategic culture seeks to conduct this investigation. Chapter Two set out to compile as up-to-date as possible a survey of the literature explicitly dealing with strategic culture. The chapter also sought to convey the flavour of the concept and to illustrate the uses to which it has been put. Finally the intention was to make an initial assessment of the literature. It was argued that although united by the belief that cultural factors are important, in other respects it is divided. Some writers might as well not have used the term at all. They make no effort to locate it within the existing literature on strategic culture nor to elaborate on what they understand it to mean, and might indeed have employed other language to make the same points. Others, however, attempt to develop the concept. Differences emerge on *why* strategic culture should be studied, and on *how* it should be studied. Regarding the purpose of studying strategic culture, the minimalists like Colin Gray and Yitzhak Klein find it possible to study culture broadly within the traditional realist paradigm of strategic studies, the how-to-do-it guide. They continue to regard conflict in the international system as inevitable, as a result of human nature or the anarchic international system. Therefore states must rely on their own strength for security against the range of possible

military threats. This can better be achieved if state leaders understand their own strategic cultural biases as well as those of potential enemies. If these writers would dispute the crude realist view that states are functionally undifferentiated units, the behaviour of which does not depend significantly on their internal organisation and historical experience, they nevertheless writers do not see strategic culture as posing a fundamental challenge to most of the central tenets of neo-realist thinking.

Strategic culture minimalists-plus and maximalists beg to differ. For minimalists-plus, improved, mutual cultural understanding may avert wars resulting from misperception. It may facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes. It may offer greater chances to mitigate the security dilemma and to construct security regimes. For maximalists, the potential for cultural change is crucial. Studying strategic culture can show that particular beliefs about the use of force are not natural or inevitable, but the product of specific times, places and circumstances. If some cultures have managed to live more peacefully than others, then lessons could be learned from them. If people are alerted to the possibility that their core values about the use of force derive from particular historical experiences, then change, in more peaceful directions, can become conceivable. Strategic culture here does not shore up the realist project, it undermines it. Progress may be facilitated from strategic cultures, understood here as mindsets in which war is seen as inevitable and force as a legitimate instrument of policy, to pacific cultures, understood as mindsets in which force has no legitimacy. War is seen as a cultural phenomenon, one which is learned and therefore which can be unlearned.[11]

As to how strategic culture is to be studied, many writers tackle the methodological issues by ignoring them. Those who consider them are divided except in the admission that cultural analysis is never simple. Examination of the political culture and belief systems literatures testify to the problems involved in the study of ideational

[11] On war as a cultural phenomenon, see Ken Booth, 'War, Security and Strategy: towards a doctrine for stable peace', in Ken Booth, (ed), *New Thinking About Strategy and International Security* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 354-55.

variables. The main issue is whether a strict, positivist approach, seeking to generate falsifiable propositions and test them empirically, to link directly cause and effect, and to build knowledge cumulatively, can pin down the elusive influence of culture. Those who initiated the study of political culture did so partly because modern research methods promised to provide quantifiable data on beliefs and values. This promise was not fulfilled, and the more recent resurgence in political culture studies has taken place in a more interpretive vein. Alastair Johnston attempts, however, to devise a positivist method to study strategic culture. Others settle for a more interpretive approach.

This thesis belongs to the latter category. It argues that culture is simply not susceptible to such methods. One reason for this is that culture is in constant flux. Change is a crucial issue in cultural analysis, for if beliefs and values are readily jettisoned and replaced, and not sustained over time, then their use for explaining and understanding behaviour is limited. They must have some persistence. At the same time, however, they do change. The group under study is always changing, as new generations arise. Beliefs and values must be transmitted to these new generations. Continuity of beliefs is not unproblematic. It needs to be explained. And there may be constant adjustment of some beliefs as events occur which challenge them. As Heraclitus observes, 'You cannot step into the same river twice, for fresh water is always flowing past you'. Moreover, the same beliefs and values will never be shared by all members of the group. There will always be inconsistencies in any statement about a group's strategic culture, therefore. Any snapshot of it will not fit everyone's beliefs at that time and will not be precisely valid at all times.

A second reason is that since beliefs and values cannot be directly observed, their existence needs to be inferred from 'valid indicators'. As earlier chapters show, there are difficulties with each of the possible sources from which beliefs may be derived. In different cases, which sources are available will vary. Ultimately, it is necessary to interpret the sources in order to infer beliefs. Those who initiated political culture studies did so partly through the belief that modern survey methods would provide hard data on

values and beliefs, but these methods did not deliver. The recent resurgence in political culture has occurred as part of a more interpretive movement.[12] Similarly, establishing firm links between beliefs and historical experiences, and present and even more so future behaviour, is highly problematic. Proof that would satisfy a strict positivist is unlikely to be obtainable. Earlier chapters highlighted the difficulties involved.

A more hermeneutic approach is therefore called for; or, 'if that word frightens, conjuring up images of biblical zealots, literary humbugs, and Teutonic professors', a more interpretive approach.[13] Such an approach acknowledges the impossibility of obtaining hard evidence for the existence and effect of a soft concept like culture, and so rejects 'behaviouralist standards of verification in favour of a criterion of plausibility'.[14] It runs the twin risks of 'overinterpretation and underinterpretation, reading more into things than reason permits and less into them than it demands'.[15] Strategic culture, as with other forms of cultural analysis, can be done badly (though of course this is also the case with all forms of analysis). Analysts may only see what is necessary to support their particular views, and may be guilty of 'evincing galaxies of significance from atoms of meaning'.[16] Equally, however, the importance of symbols and values can be overlooked.

Each case will differ in available sources from which the culture may be inferred, and also in sources from which it has originated. There can be no rigid model for the study of a group's strategic culture. The intended value of the framework in Chapter Four is to offer a rough guide through these relatively uncharted waters. It suggests what sorts of geographical features, interacting with historical experience and political culture, might shape thinking about different aspects of the use of force. Working with whatever

[12] On this point see Stephen Welch, *The Concept of Political Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 1-11.
[13] Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (London: Fontana, 1993), p. 21.
[14] Welch, p. 4.
[15] Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, p. 16.
[16] William McIlvanney, *These Words: Weddings and After* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1984), p. 21.

sources are available and appropriate to the particular group, and interpreting them as seems fit, the challenge is to identify what seem to the most important beliefs of a group.

The aim then is to examine the ways in which strategic cultures impinge upon behaviour. The more interpretive form of explanation tries to connect 'action to its sense rather than behaviour to its determinants'.[17] How do people understand their environment, how do they perceive the meaning of events and actions? But other uses of strategic culture are possible, and this thesis has shown these also. There is a role in explaining particular choices, for culture can set preferences and make certain cases harder or easier to argue. There is a possible instrumental role also for culture, for beliefs can be manipulated in debate to support certain policies. Exactly how culture operates may well vary from case to case.

Looking to the future, more case studies taking in more countries would be of use in developing strategic culture. In particular, more comparative assessments adhering as close as possible to a common framework would be beneficial for factoring out different factors from the analysis. Little work has been done on Central and South America, making that fertile ground for enquiry. We might ask, for instance, about the success of regimes aimed at halting nuclear proliferation in Latin America. Is there a cultural basis for the success there, in contrast with the situation between India and Pakistan? Interesting work might also be done on Germany and Japan, two states whose recent military experience might be expected to have wrought change in thinking about force. Have ingrained cultures changed? Or do old attitudes still exist at some levels? There are numerous interesting questions to be asked about these states. Most importantly, perhaps, future strategic culture studies might open themselves up to new ideas from other areas. This will be discussed shortly, but first, what can be said about British strategic culture?

[17] Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, p. 34.

British strategic culture

Chapters Five and Six take up this challenge as they turn to the case study on British strategic culture. It is an interesting time to do so. 1995 was marked by extensive 50th anniversary commemorations of various events of 1945, especially VE-Day. These formed the culmination of a series of acts of remembrance of major events of World War Two, including notably D-Day, reflecting a conscious attempt to keep the war alive in the popular memory. While all political parties in Britain, and most people, seemed to agree that such acts of remembrance should take place, there was debate about the form which they should take and the meaning which was and should be attached to them. Should there be an emphasis on victory, or would that lead to a focus on war and even perhaps glorification of it, when the importance of peace should be promoted and the view that in war everyone loses stressed? Was it appropriate to celebrate the successful prosecution of the war by the British 'nation', or should a more international view be taken? Was there a distastefully jingoistic aspect to the proceedings, or a respectable national pride often missing today? Was it vitally necessary to honour the memory of the dead if global war is not to be repeated? Was there a dangerous nostalgia for a glorious past when Britain should have been looking forward for prosperity, not backward? Inevitably also, the events of 1945 must have different meanings for those who lived through them and those who did not.

Whether these events should be celebrated or commemorated, how and whether they should be remembered, whether victory in the war ultimately benefited or damaged British interests, are all open to debate. In any case, the debate reflects the continued importance of the war in shaping our thinking today, and the desire to utilise past experience in arguing particular points of view. The case study chapters attempted to employ some aspects of the framework to make sense of British strategic decisions in the key 1945-52 period in terms of past experience. Chapter Five sketched a profile of British strategic culture. This was a first cut at this enterprise. No doubt many more points could be made, and others may wish to take these up. The process illustrated some of the

difficulties involved. What should the starting period be? How can history and myth be disentangled, if at all? How can past events be linked to current beliefs? There are no glib answers to such questions.

Chapter Six attempted to explain some British strategic decisions in terms of the cultural baggage identified. If the structure of the situation in which Britain found itself did not demand the acquisition of nuclear weapons, why should the British have gone down that road? If 'rational strategic man' might have taken the view that Britain could not produce an effective nuclear force, and that the opportunity costs of attempting to do so were too high, why did 'national strategic man' proceed with the atomic project? Pervasive conceptions of Britain, rooted in British history, as a 'Great Power', appear to have rendered any other course of action unthinkable to most decision-makers. Arguments which made reference to British history seemed to carry more weight than those resting on economic or military logic.

A deterrent strategy to employ the nuclear weapons, once constructed, similarly made sense in the context of British air power experience and of interwar appeasement. The analogy with Munich provided a powerful rationale for a deterrent policy which involved demonstrating military strength and resolve. Decision-making conformed to a particular British style. The strategic culture approach does add richness to our understanding of which decisions were taken, the manner in which they were taken, and how cases were argued. Others have perhaps made similar points. However, the tendency is for cultural analysis to be implicit. The danger here is that it is applied idiosyncratically, and with no systematic effort to measure its weight relative to other factors. Use of a common framework, and the attempt to search systematically for evidence of the role of strategic culture, should prevent it becoming a residual variable, turned to when no other explanation presents itself.

What directions could future studies of British strategic culture take? Some were suggested at the close of Chapter Five. In profiling British strategic culture, there is scope to search for evidence of all sorts of sub-cultures. Are there variations in strategic thinking in Ireland, Wales, England and Scotland? Are there difference across gender? Also some aspects of the profile could no doubt have been investigated in more depth. And of course various other periods of British strategic history could be explored with a view to assessing the importance of culture.

Does Britain's Great Power legacy, for instance, continue to have an effect on British strategic behaviour? Anthony Eden remarked that 'we were a global power or we were nothing'.[18] The sense that Britain was a Great Power with global interests and responsibilities arguably informed the decision taken by Eden, when prime minister, to embark upon the ill-fated Suez operation. This would make an interesting topic for further research into British strategic culture. Such research could consider the extent to which a strategic cultural belief in Britain's global role and responsibilities led to the decision to use force. Britain's forced abandonment, under pressure from the superpowers, of that operation, could also be examined to see if it constitutes one of the dramatic events, discussed earlier, which confront decision-makers with the inappropriateness of core strategic beliefs and lead to change. For Oliver Franks, the former British Ambassador to the United States, Suez

> was like a flash of lightening [*sic*] on a dark night. What it did was to light up an unfamiliar landscape. It was a landscape in which the two superpowers and principally the United States had told us to stop and we'd had to stop...This was not being a world power. This was being told by a world power what the limits were and I thought that everything was different from then on. If you like, illusion stripped away...[19]

[18] Cited in Peter Hennessy and Caroline Anstey, *Moneybags and Brains: The Anglo-American 'Special Relationship' Since 1945*, Strathclyde Papers On Government and Politics No. 1 (Glasgow: University of Strathclyde, 1990), p. 10.
[19] *Ibid*.

Or does the illusion linger on in some form? Michael Quinlan, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence until his retirement in 1992, concludes that 'we have a certain sense of ourselves, borne of history which does mean that we view what we might do rather differently from some of our partners'.[20] Italy, a state with similar wealth and population, and facing no more obvious external threats, spends half of what Britain does on defence. This suggests a future research topic.

The 'special relationship' is another fertile area for research. Is Britain's so-called special relationship with the United States an 'invented tradition', nurtured by the British government in the 1940s and 1950s when close alliance with the United States was perceived to be essential? Does this invented special relationship today hinder a clear-sighted appreciation of Britain's role in Europe? Or have close relations between these two states been founded on close cultural understanding and shared cultural, and even strategic cultural, backgrounds?

An interesting research project would be to compare the strategic cultures of European states. Comparison of Britain and France, states of similar sizes and with parallel histories in certain respects, would be useful. If significant differences in strategic outlook can be discerned which cannot be traced to situation or structure, then the importance of culture might be asserted. Comparison with Germany also would be interesting. How has the rather different experience of war of Germany affected its attitudes towards the use of force? A comparative project could ask which attitudes are shared across Europe and where differences emerge.

[20] Cited in Peter Hennessy and Zareer Masani, *Out of the Midday Sun? Britain and the Great Power Impulse*, Strathclyde Papers On Government and Politics No. 14 (Glasgow: University of Strathclyde, 1992), p. 3.

Culture and International Politics

Above it was observed that strategic culture might benefit from opening up further to new ideas. The approach taken by this thesis was to begin within strategic studies and spread out. In asking where strategic culture should go from here, the conclusion will cast the net wider still. To study this subject is to open up all sorts of possibilities that go well beyond traditional strategic analysis. Are there other subjects from which insight might be drawn? Strategic culture could act as a Trojan horse, smuggling these ideas back into strategic studies.

In fact, in many other areas of International Politics, it is possible to detect a growing attention to culture. Strategic studies is not the only academic approach to the study of conflict. The subject of conflict resolution is concerned with similar phenomena, but stems from a quite different tradition.[21] These approaches to conflict had little to say to each other during the Cold War. Now that the Cold War is over, more contact 7 being made and a debate is underway about the place of each within the broader field of security studies. There is evidence of some coming together of the two approaches.[22] In this context it is interesting to note that culture is being identified within both the conflict resolution and strategic studies literatures as an important issue. Indeed, only a few months before the August 1994 conference on strategic culture in the Asia-Pacific region, mentioned earlier, which took place on the Malaysian island of Langkawi, another conference had been held on Penang, another island off the west coast of peninsular Malaysia. That conference brought together conflict resolution experts to discuss 'Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the Asia Pacific Region: Culture, Problem-Solving and Peacemaking'.[23] Culture could even form a meeting point on which the two sub-fields could converge and move forward together.

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[21] On the different traditions in the study of conflict see A.J.R. Groom, 'Paradigms in Conflict: the Strategist, the Conflict Researcher and the Peace Researcher', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (April 1988), pp. 97-115; and David J. Dunn, 'Peace Research versus Strategic Studies', in Booth, *New Thinking About Strategy and International Security*.

[22] See Dunn, p. 69.

[23] Some of the papers are reproduced in a special issue of the journal *Pacifica Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1994).

Within the field of conflict resolution, among those who have done most to bring culture to the fore are Avruch and Black. These cultural anthropologists reject the views that people everywhere behave in the same way in conflict situations, and that they behave in wholly idiosyncratic fashions. Rather they focus on middle range explanations of human conflict behaviour, looking for regularity of conflict behaviour among groups short of all humanity. For Avruch and Black 'the culture question' is 'among the two or three most important questions facing conflict resolution theory'.[24]

Their point is that conflict occurs everywhere, but there is considerable variation between different cultures on how much occurs and how it is coped with. Cultural differences play a part in explaining this. The culture of a group 'consists of both explicit rules, beliefs, values and symbols, and implicit, unrecognised sets of meanings, metaphors, stories, and discourses through which experience is interpreted and which are unconsciously reproduced as part of social life'.[25] Within Conflict Resolution the referent group may be a pre-industrial society or a modern nation or ethnic group, and its rules, beliefs, values and so on regarding conflict are of importance in understanding and resolving it. Groups develop their own understandings of and assign their own meaning to conflict, and they develop different negotiating and bargaining styles and approaches to resolving conflict. Some cultures have developed more effective means of dealing with conflict, such as the Norwegians, who are said to seek to avoid conflict situations or develop non-violent responses to conflict. Those with less effective means of handling conflict could well learn from studying them.[26]

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[24] Kevin Avruch and Peter W. Black, 'The Culture Question and Conflict Resolution', *Peace and Change*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (January 1991), pp. 22-26.

[25] Cited in Tamara Duffey, 'A Theoretical Examination of the Role of Culture in Conflict Resolution with Special Reference to Japan: Implication for Practice and Training', Paper prepared for a conference on Conflict Resolution in the Asia-Pacific Region: Culture, Problem Solving and Peacemaking, Penang, Malaysia, 1994, p 4.

[26] On this point see Marc Howard Ross, *The Culture of Conflict: Interpretations and Interests in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), especially pp. *xi-xii* and 161-64.

Cross-cultural learning is therefore one reason to study conflict within different cultures. Another reason is that conflict between groups who hold different views of what it means may be particularly intractable, especially as ways of resolving conflict, perhaps based on understandings of it, may also differ. In his work on the Egyptian-Israeli conflict, Raymond Cohen argues that a mutual lack of cultural understanding prolonged the conflict between these states and hindered the search for solutions.[27] Therefore those who would intervene to resolve conflicts will need to try to see the conflict as the parties involved do if they are to promote its resolution. They cannot simply apply theories of resolution assumed to have universal validity. Very often, as with strategic theories, supposedly universal theories turn out to be rooted in particular Western beliefs and values, for Conflict Resolution has in common with Strategic Studies its 'Western' intellectual origins.[28]

Cultural analysis has a number of adherents, but as in strategic studies, it has yet to establish itself firmly within conflict resolution. Avruch and Black comment of Conflict Resolution that 'there are strong indications in the still-sparse literature that culture *matters* in some way that has yet to be precisely determined', echoing Colin Gray's remark that scholars of strategic culture know it is important, 'but they are not sure *how* important'.[29] Within conflict resolution as within strategic studies, there is an awareness among scholars working on cultural analysis of its inherent complexities and difficulties.[30] Within each there are passionate critiques of cultural analysis.[31] But within each, there is also a sense among advocates that it is too important to be ignored.

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[27] Raymond Cohen, *Culture and Conflict in Egyptian-Israeli Relations: A Dialogue of the Deaf* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990).
[28] See Duffey, p. 1.
[29] Avruch and Black, 'The Culture Question and Conflict Resolution', p. 26; and Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986), p. *xii*.
[30] See for example Avruch and Black, 'The Culture Question and Conflict Resolution', pp. 41-42; and Gray, p. 35.
[31] For instance, Snyder, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture'; and I. William Zartman, 'A Skeptic's View', in Guy Olivier Faure and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, (eds), *Culture and Negotiation: The Resolution of Water Disputes* (London: Sage, 1993).

In the field of military history also, culture appears to be achieving greater prominence. John Keegan, the military historian, recently represented the Gulf War as 'a clash of two quite different military cultures'. Each of these cultures has deep historical roots and is shaped by the broader cultural setting in which it has developed. The West, drawing on Clausewitz, emphasised directness in the attainment through military means of political objectives. In doing so it believed that it had thoroughly defeated Saddam Hussein. Saddam, however, did not accept this. Through 'recourse to a familiar Islamic rhetoric', he denied that he had been defeated in spirit, thus robbing the West of the political point of its 'victory'. For Keegan this was 'a striking exemplification of the inutility of the "Western way of warfare" when confronted by an opponent who refuses to share its cultural assumptions'.[32]

Keegan focuses on civilisations and argues that they possess distinct beliefs and values with regard to the use of force. He looks at how the West's military instrument was blunted against the different set of meanings given to the use of force by the enemy. The effective use of military force, he argues, requires that each party involved understands the messages being sent. Groups with different 'military cultures', as with different languages, may struggle to understand each other. Whatever the merit of the argument in this particular case, it is an argument which is increasingly being aired by those who study military history. This point finds support in a 1993 article by John Shy in the *Journal of Military History*. Shy writes that a number of recent works have, in ambitious and stimulating fashion, examined 'the cultural dimension of war'. They may not all have referred explicitly to culture, and they have not introduced the term with a fanfare, but Shy believes that he can reasonably assert that 'there is something fairly new afoot within our field of study, with traditional questions about how wars are waged being approached in a way that can fairly be called cultural'.[33] This includes, for example, investigation of

[32] John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London: Pimlico, 1994), p. *xi*.
[33] John Shy, 'The Cultural Approach to the History of War', *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 57, No. 5 (October 1993), pp. 13-26.

'motivating belief-systems as disparate as American and Japanese racism' and their effect on war-making.[34]

In the study of foreign policies also, signs of attention to culture can be found. In his book *The American Style of Foreign Policy: Cultural Politics and Foreign Affairs*, published in 1983, Robert Dallek complained that by the 1970s, the study of US foreign policy had begun to ignore 'nonrational influences' on and the 'hidden side of' US foreign policy.[35] He set out to rekindle debate about 'those subjective influences that makers and backers of foreign policy barely glimpse themselves'. His book was a study of 'undercurrents, of mood, tone or milieu, of a climate of feeling that almost imperceptibly insinuates itself into concrete ideas and actions'.[36] This was a matter of culture and of the style of US foreign policy. 'Like the atmosphere', Dallek admitted, 'these matters are not easily described. Yet they are there'.[37] Studying them would be difficult and his book would tread uncharted ground. However, he argued that 'if we are going to carry the study of American foreign policy beyond the confines of where we have been', this was a necessary step.[38] It is a step which has been taken by others: Arthur Schlesinger when he examined 'national peculiarities' and foreign policy; and Michael Vlahos looking at culture and foreign policy.[39]

The work of a number of international historians has also tried to develop notions similar to strategic culture. These historians, who have been described as 'lumpers' (as distinct from the 'splitters' who try to tell the story through the documents), attempt to

[34] *Ibid*, p. 25.
[35] Robert Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy: Cultural Politics and Foreign Affairs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), p. *xii*. Prior to the 1970s, Stanley Hoffmann examined American foreign policy style in *Gulliver's Troubles, Or the Setting of American Foreign Policy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968.
[36] Dallek, p. *xiii*.
[37] *Ibid*.
[38] *Ibid*, pp. *xiv* and *xx*.
[39] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., 'Foreign Policy and the American Character', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Fall 1983), p. 1; and Michael Vlahos, 'Culture and Foreign Policy', *Foreign Policy*, No. 82 (Spring 1991), pp. 59-78.

stress the continuity of security policies over long time scales.[40] Paul Kennedy has written that 'the history, geography, and culture of each country on our planet are unique'.[41] As noted earlier, he has examined British external policy over a couple of centuries, with emphasis on geographical and economic as well as diplomatic and political factors.[42] John Lewis Gaddis has also sought to discern patterns in US post-war national security policy, developing the idea of 'geopolitical codes' from Alexander George's work on operational codes.[43] Gaddis argues that these codes represent the assumptions of US leaders about US interests in the world, about potential threats to these interests and about feasible responses to them. He identifies various different codes which have operated since the beginning of the Cold War.

Gaddis and Kennedy both in different ways look to underlying beliefs and assumptions which give meaning to the actions of decision-makers. So too does James Joll, to whom reference was also made earlier. Joll underlined the importance for documentary historians of seeking to comprehend the 'unspoken assumptions' of decision-makers which never make their way into the documents.[44] On the subject of German war aims in 1914, Joll notes that the famous September memorandum tells only part of the story:

> our assessment of the significance of the September memorandum of war aims depends on our general view of the mentality, the *Weltanschauung*, of the German leaders as much as on the document itself.[45]

[40] See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. *vii*.
[41] Paul Kennedy, 'Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition', in Paul Kennedy, (ed), *Grand Strategy in War and Peace* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 6.
[42] See Paul Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy 1870-1945* (London: Fontana, 1984), pp. 13-18.
[43] Gaddis, pp. *vii-ix*.
[44] James Joll, '1914: The Unspoken Assumptions', in H.W. Koch, (ed), *The Origins of the First World War: Great Power Rivalry and German War Aims* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 309-12.
[45] *Ibid*, p. 310.

If Joll is vague on how the mentality of leaders can be accessed, Deborah Larson has more recently undertaken a more examination of the 'development of the American Cold War belief system'.[46] Given that the Cold War was waged with the intention of winning over the 'minds of men', she reasons, it is appropriate to focus on the perceptions of decision-makers. This will provide insight into the available documentary evidence.

Larson's work suggests another body of literature which ought to be of use to scholars of strategic culture. The need to try to view the world in the same way as decision-makers in order to make sense of their actions also underlies the literature on belief systems in international relations. Steve Smith has identified various distinct approaches which can be grouped under the heading of belief systems.[47] What unites them is that they concern the links between the operational and psychological environments of actors. In order to make sense of their complex world, it is held, actors need to produce simplified pictures of it - just as social scientists produce theories which simplify the social sphere in order to explain actions within it. This leads to the existence of various different world views, or 'perceptual lenses' or 'prisms', through which new information is filtered. The behaviour of states is affected by the belief systems of their decision-makers. In many respects this approach resembles strategic culture. The belief systems literature should therefore be a further source of conceptual enlightenment.

Within strategic studies, conflict resolution, military history, and foreign policy studies, history and International Politics, therefore, the study of culture and beliefs appears recently to have attained a higher profile. The works quoted could be straws in the wind, of course, signifying little more than an occasional interest in culture and visible only because we are looking for them. Yet there are enough straws to allow us to build some bricks, especially when we turn to the discipline of International Politics as a whole. Culture, hitherto a byword within the subject of International Politics, is indeed

[46] Larson, p. *ix*.
[47] Steve Smith, 'Belief Systems and International Relations', in Richard Little and Steve Smith, (eds), *Belief Systems and International Relations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 18-27.

fast becoming a buzzword there also, at least as the subject is studied in the United States and the United Kingdom. Its progress from a 'forgotten' to a conspicuous variable is indicated by the increasing frequency with which reference is made to it in the literature of, and conferences on, International Politics.[48] N.J. Rengger notes that until recently culture was largely absent from the indexes of major International Politics textbooks, but more recent texts make greater reference to it.[49] Both the International Studies Association and the British International Studies Association annual conferences in recent years have devoted panels to culture and international relations, and a conference involving young scholars of international relations, held at the University of Keele in 1993, identified culture as one important 'new direction' in International Politics. From the first mentioned conference panel there emerged a book on *Culture and International Relations*, while the journal *Millennium* has also recently devoted a special issue to the same subject.[50] If there is not sufficient evidence here to demonstrate that culture is becoming a key variable in the discipline, there are more than just straws in the wind. It is possible to suggest without too much exaggeration that we are seeing at least the beginnings of a cultural turn in International Politics.

Moreover, in the human sciences more broadly, observers have also detected a 'turn to culture' taking place.[51] This implies a movement towards regarding human behaviour as shaped by the belief systems of local cultural units rather than human nature coded into people's genes or the structures in which people operate. This movement is seen as being bound up with the condition of postmodernity.[52] Postmodern attitudes

[48] Culture is characterised as a forgotten variable by Jean-Marie Bonthous in 'Understanding Intelligence Across Cultures', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Fall 1994), p. 278.
[49] Nick Rengger, 'Culture, Society and Order in World Politics', in John Baylis and N.J. Rengger, *Dilemmas of World Politics: International Issues in a Changing World* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), pp. 94-95. That book and Booth and Smith, *International Relations Theory Today*, devote more space to culture.
[50] See Chay; and *Millennium*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Winter 1993). There is also an earlier work with a similar title, R.P. Anand, *Cultural Factors in International Relations* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1981).
[51] For instance, see David Chaney, *The Cultural Turn: Scene-setting Essays on Contemporary Cultural History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); and Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992).
[52] See Chaney, p. 182; and Robertson, p. 32.

which stress plurality and particularities as opposed to universalities encourage the celebration of differences in the beliefs and values of local cultural units rather than the pursuit of universal genetic traits. (On the other hand, postmodern suspicion of grand narratives such as the evolution of cultural systems counterbalances this view.)

The cultural turn in the human sciences as a whole can be expected to affect International Politics, for intellectual developments in other areas of social science tend to come to International Politics, though sometimes belatedly. As well as, and linked to, postmodernity, various other intellectual currents affecting the human sciences and International Politics have helped to turn the tide in the favour of culture. Difficult to define and to operationalise, culture is a nebulous concept representing 'everything that good, positivistically trained international relations scholars should hate'.[53] However, as part of the post-positivist debate which is currently taking place, positivistically trained scholars find themselves and their theoretical assumptions under challenge.[54] Critics question the need for rigorous standards of proof modelled on the natural sciences. It is easier in this context for International Politics scholars to free themselves from these assumptions and to gain additional purchase on the slippery concept of culture, the importance of which defies objective measurement.

Traditional realists and neo-realists too are increasingly under fire. Critics argue that to see human behaviour as the product respectively of an essentialised view of human nature or the nature of the international system is misguided and simplistic. Cultural analysis is consistent with these critiques, opposing the black-boxing of states and endorsing investigation of how their internal workings affect their external relations, rejecting the view that human nature determines behaviour and looking at how the cultural environment shapes it. Similar reasons, incidentally, underlay the growth of

[53] Rengger, p. 85.
[54] On post-positivism and International Politics see Josef Lapid, 'The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivistic Era', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (September 1989).

interest in belief systems in international relations. That subject was for much of its history reluctant to embrace the study of belief systems. This was partly because neo-realists, dominant in the subject, focused their analyses of international politics on the level of the international system, openly denying explanatory power to psychological approaches which focused on the level of the individual. Increasing interest in belief systems was, Smith argues, the result of growing dissatisfaction with realism within International Politics. From this dissatisfaction arose the academic subject of Foreign Policy Analysis, which emphasised the importance of the perceptions held by actors of their situation rather than human nature and the nature of the international system.[55]

The weakening of barriers between disciplines within the human sciences has also allowed culture to come more to the fore within International Politics. It has been argued, for instance, that in the past the division of labour between International Politics and Sociology led to the 'neglect of national cultures, identities and traditions' in the former.[56] As that situation changes, and international relations scholars take more notice of the concerns of Sociology and other disciplines, and they take more notice of International Politics, so culture makes its way deeper into International Politics. Ideas about the socialisation of new generations into the beliefs of society come from Sociology. Psychology, the insights of which have been neglected by International Politics, is also now paid greater heed, so that the belief systems of different people and groups, related to culture, receive more attention. From Anthropology, in which culture has long been a central variable, come many other ideas. This 'blurring of genres' is both evidenced and furthered by the writings of Clifford Geertz, whose phrase that is.[57] That Geertz and his ideas on culture and thick description have become so well known beyond his own discipline indicates the readiness of scholars to look beyond their own patch for insight, and this, with his well-written and accessible work, he encourages.[58]

[55] Richard Little and Steve Smith, 'Introduction', in Little and Smith, pp. 15-16.
[56] Robertson, p. 5.
[57] Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, p. 19.
[58] See also Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

Indeed, if some anthropologists complain that culture, their key concept, has been 'imperialized by other disciplines', Geertz welcomes this.[59] In 1983 he wrote that ten years ago,

> the proposal that cultural phenomena should be treated as significant social systems posing expositive questions was a much more alarming one for social scientists - allergic, as they tend to be, to anything literary of inexact - than it is now. In part, it is a result of the growing recognition that the established approach to treating such phenomena, laws-and-causes social physics, was not producing the triumphs of prediction, control, and testability that had been for so long promised in its name. And in part, it is a result of intellectual deprovincialization. The broader currents of modern thought have finally begun to impinge upon what has been, and in some quarters still is, a snug and insular enterprise.[60]

Finally, international theory is growing more aware of its own cultural roots and biases in Western philosophy, and thus is becoming more sensitive to cultural variation.[61] Recent trends in the realm of international theory are therefore conducive to the study of culture. At the same time, changes in the 'empirical realm' of the post-Cold War world demand that culture be afforded greater emphasis. The ending of the Cold War presents us with a more fragmented world. All sorts of peoples in far away places, about whom we previously knew little, have moved from the periphery to the centre-stage in world politics, as it is studied in the West at least. The diffusion of power following on from the break-down of bipolar confrontation allows Iraq the freedom to act on its own initiative where in the past it would have been wary of defying the superpowers. The behaviour of Iraqis, Serbs, Kurds, Chechens and a host of others takes on new importance and, for some scholars, entails understanding of their culturally moulded values and beliefs. Area studies may now assume a more central position within International Politics.[62]

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[59] See Yosef Lapid, 'Culture's Ship: Returns and Departures in International Relations Theory', in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (London and Boulder: Rienner, 1996), p. 3.
[60] Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, p. 3.
[61] See Booth, 'Dare not to Know', p. 333.
[62] That this has not always been so within strategic studies at least is lamented by Booth in *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, especially pp. 147-52.

Even prior to the end of the Cold War, culture attracted the attention of scholars of International Politics who saw Western cultural hegemony in decline. As other cultural systems emerged from the shadow of the Western one, profound implications were advanced for world politics in general and the maintenance of an international society in particular. For some, the diversity and incompatibility of cultural values in the world, and the relativist tendency to see all as equally valid, undermines the common values on which international society must be based, it can be argued.[63] Others welcomed cultural diversity, seeing it as bringing opportunities and not just dangers. Walker, for instance, called for 'enquiries into ways in which ethnocentrism might be transcended, in which cultures might meet in a creative dialogue about future possibilities'.[64] Walker noted, however, that less optimistic analyses of the future were being advanced. 'Some observers', he wrote in 1984, 'have begun to suggest that we are entering an epoch that will be characterized increasingly by a clash of civilizations...'.[65] In doing so, he anticipated a recent article which has done much to push culture onto the centre stage of International Politics scholarship: Samuel Huntington's 'The Clash of Civilizations?'.[66]

Appearing in *Foreign Affairs*, probably the most mainstream foreign policy journal in the United States, Huntington's article has generated considerable heat and shed some light on culture. It takes arguments about the existence of different cultural systems in the world and links them squarely to the likelihood of global conflict: 'the next world war, if there is one', Huntington predicts, 'will be a war between civilizations'.[67] Huntington's article outlines a new paradigm to predict and explain conflict in the post-Cold War world, taking the main unit of analysis to be the civilization: 'the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species'. Huntington identifies up to eight

[63] See Rengger, especially pp. 88-90.
[64] R.B.J. Walker, 'East Wind, West Wind: Civilizations, Hegemonies, and World Orders', in R.B.J. Walker, (ed), *Culture, Ideology, and World Order* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 2-3.
[65] *Ibid*.
[66] Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49.
[67] *Ibid*, pp. 38-39.

such groupings in the world, including the Western, Islamic and Confucian civilizations, and argues that conflict among them was inevitable due to their fundamental cultural differences. The article has attracted much comment, mostly of an unfavourable nature.[68] Critics question whether civilizations are meaningful entities; whether, to the extent that they are meaningful, conflict has occurred and must occur among them; and whether such conflict as does occur is the result of cultural incompatibilities rather than material inequalities. They also point to the dangers inherent in Huntington's essentially pessimistic outlook, fearing that if it is replicated within governments, states and civilizations will begin to undertake preparations to secure themselves in the inevitable clash of civilizations, creating security dilemmas and thereby helping to bring about the very clash of civilizations which they seek to avoid.

Culture is, in various ways, on the agenda of International Politics. Many of the approaches to the subject which challenge mainstream views have long recognised the value and indeed 'derived much of their energy' from the study of culture and identity.[69] So constructivists such as Alexander Wendt discuss the idea that, far from there being one inevitable logic of anarchy to which all states must respond, various different logics of anarchy are possible. Anarchy is, he writes famously, 'what states make of it'. Our ideas about anarchy have been socially constructed through a lengthy process of interaction between states. There is potential for change.[70] The famously nebulous nature of this term means that some caution is called for: the various writers using the term may well mean quite different things by it. Nevertheless, in searching for new ways in which to develop the study of strategic culture, there are many areas of writing which may be tapped. All

[68] Among the many critiques are Richard E. Rubenstein and Jarle Crocker, 'Challenging Huntington', *Foreign Policy*, No. 96 (Fall 1994), pp. 113-28; Jacinta O'Hagan, 'Civilisational Conflict? Looking for Cultural Enemies', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1995), pp. 5-18; Adam Tarock, 'Civilisational Conflict? Fighting the Enemy Under a New Banner', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1995), pp. 19-38; and various responses to Huntington in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (September/October 1993).
[69] Lapid, 'Culture's Ship', p. 4.
[70] On this subject see Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of it: the social construction of power politics', *International Organisation*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 391-425.

those scholars in their different areas of International Politics who are working on culture in some respect would do well to pool their ideas.

A recurrent theme in the thesis has been that strategic culture may be studied in a positivist manner or in a more interpretive one. The same point has been made about political culture. It was observed that the recent resurgence in political culture takes a more interpretive turn. Those who wish to pursue further the study of strategic culture would do well to investigate the post-positivist and other debates in International Politics. The Snyder-Booth debate on strategic culture, discussed below, can be seen as part of that wider debate. To clarify the issues raised by the positivist-interpretive divide, strategists should venture out into wider academic debates.

T. E. Huxley wrote that 'it is the customary fate of new truths to begin as heresies and end as superstitions'. While strategic culture is not being proposed as a truth, if it does become accepted, it could then become a superstition. Clifford Geertz, in his seminal work *The Interpretation of Cultures*, identifies this pitfall. He notes that new concepts can get out of control. Suddenly in vogue, they can obscure other approaches, be applied widely and inappropriately and expected to solve all problems. Disillusion can set in when inevitably they fail to live up to such inflated advance notices. Within Anthropology, this seems to have been the case with culture. Now, work done on culture is 'concerned to limit, specify, focus and contain'. By cutting culture down to size anthropologists are 'actually insuring its continued importance rather than undermining it'.[71] The same might be said of political culture, itself currently enjoying a resurgence of interest. It has gone through a phase of enormous expectations and then their inevitable disappointment from which it is only now emerging. To avoid the possibility of setting up strategic culture for a similar roller coaster ride of ups and downs, it is important not to oversell the concept now, and possibly to narrow it down in the future. The insights of the

[71] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 3-4.

wider realm of thinking about International Politics and the human sciences might offer assistance in this regard.

Strategic culture remains a felicitous phrase. If the ideas which it encompasses are not new, it nevertheless gives expression to notions which have often lain implicit in analyses, and it promises to serve as an ideological magnet, drawing together work which constitutes cultural analysis by other names. Moreover, it has the potential to enthuse those who have felt that there was something missing from strategic studies. Strategic culture fills the gap and invites further analysis. If Snyder had not invented the term for us, someone else would have needed to.

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Appendix

STRATEGIC CULTURE: FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

by Ken Booth and Alan Macmillan

Paper prepared for a conference on 'Strategic Culture and Conflict Resolution in the Asia-Pacific Region', held on Langkawi Island, Malaysia, 14-17 August 1994. [This paper was circulated to participants in advance of the conference. The participants were asked to draw on the framework to produce papers on individual countries within the region. They were also circulated with a draft chapter written by Ken Booth and Alan Macmillan on the concept of strategic culture.]

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

We would like each chapter to begin with an introductory paragraph giving a short statement in answer to the question: with respect to the country you have studied, have you identified traditional ways of thinking and behaving with respect to the threat and use of force? If so, is the idea of a strategic culture strong or weak? If not, briefly indicate why.

SOURCES OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

While sensitive to the criticism that the three elements below do not exhaust sources of explanation of strategic culture, we do think that these are the most significant, and that other sources could be embraced by them.

1. Geography and resources

Geography is obviously a key factor in any country's thinking about its security. 'Geography is the bones of strategy', said Theodore Ropp. How have geographical factors affected the strategic culture of your country? (For example: What impact has geography had on patterns of adversity and amity - such as traditionally hostile neighbours? Have geographical factors affected the relative importance of the different armed services? Have they provided secure, natural borders? Have they affected strategic doctrines - predispositions to offensive or defensive strategies?). The importance of economic considerations (self-sufficiency in resources, dependence on others, economic potential etc) can be considered here. What has been the effect on strategy of the presence or absence of strategically-relevant resources?

2. History and experience

How have historical experiences affected communal attitudes to security and insecurity? (Are words like 'paranoia' or 'complacency' relevant?). What are the most significant historical memories and oversights about war and peace? How is strategic history perceived (which events are given most meaning)? Has the country suffered badly at the hands of others (eg has it lost national territory)? What generalisations can be made about threat perception? Identify the major symbolic events and people for each state, and the myths surrounding them. For Britain, for example, 'Hitler', 'Munich', 'Appeasement', 'Dunkirk' and 'Churchill' are words with great mythical power.

3. Political structure and defence organisation

What traditionally have been the most important features of the country's political system? Has it been liberal-democratic or communist, centralised or decentralised, open or closed, pluralist or dominated by narrow elites? Is there a tradition of stability or instability? Has

the system undergone any radical change? Has public opinion had much of a role to play in policy-making? Have the armed forces involved themselves in politics? Can any generalisations be made about the type of polity and its military behaviour?

In particular, what have been the main features of the country's defence decision-making organisation? Who makes defence policy: civilians or the military establishment? Is there much crossover between the military and civilian sectors? Within the military establishment, is there much interservice rivalry? Is any one service dominant? Has there traditionally been a professional or a conscript army? What effect have these factors had on the strategic culture of the country?

POLITICAL CULTURE AND STRATEGIC CULTURE

One of the most difficult questions faced by students of strategic culture is its relationship with the concept of political culture. How do the two interrelate? Do we regard strategic culture as a branch of political culture, or as one of its essential elements? If, as a result of the comparative study, we can do something to resolve these issues, then we will have taken an important step forward in the development of the concept of strategic culture. In addition to the problems of thinking about the general relationship, there are also a series of more specific questions we should address, as is suggested below.

How would you describe the main features of the country's political culture? What are the main factors shaping the political culture? How does the political culture shape the making and execution of the country's strategic policy? (eg to what extent does ideology affect the pattern of allies and enemies?) How are strategic beliefs passed on? Is there an identifiable militarist tradition in the society? If so, how does it manifest itself (eg in relation to issues like conscription or the use of force)? What are the sources of militarism? What impact do ethical, religious and gender factors have on strategic culture? What value do people place on human life, for instance? How do they see martyrdom? Do

particular societies or groups have exaggerated notions of masculinity and violence? Do such attitudes affect the prospects for using force, or working for conflict resolution?

TRADITIONAL STRATEGIC CULTURE

Having made some generalisations about the sources of strategic culture, we want you to draw up a profile of the country's traditional strategic culture. The political science literature is divided on the issue of whether the concept of political culture should confine itself just to studying attitudes ('patterns of orientations') or behaviour as well. We appreciate both arguments, but since we believe that strategy is ultimately a practical activity, and because we hope to derive policy relevant conclusions from this project, we want everybody to consider both attitudes and behaviour in strategic culture, and to try and link them together. Consequently, in this essentially historical section of each chapter we would like relatively brief surveys of traditional thought and behaviour (we are content to be flexible about the dividing line you choose between 'traditional' and 'contemporary': for some countries 1945 might be the significant turning point, for others it might be the date of national independence or the date of the founding of a new political system).

1. The history of strategic thought

Who have been the influential sources of strategic thought? Did they come from within or outside the country? What did they say? Are their ideas still thought relevant? Have there been distinctive strategic sub-cultures (ethnic, class, military etc)?

2. The history of strategic doctrine

What generalisations can be made about the country's strategic doctrine (its plans and execution regarding the threat and use of force)? Is it possible to talk about a distinctive national style? Was there any distinctive and repeated behaviour? (eg, a tendency to act unilaterally versus a tendency to be 'alliance-prone'? a pattern of military complacency and unpreparedness? a history of deference to big neighbours? a readiness to use the military

instrument? a predisposition to over-insurance in military terms? etc).

3. Profile of traditional strategic culture

On the basis of the discussion in the two previous sections, we would like a short profile drawn up, summarising the main features of the country's strategic culture. What is distinctive in the country's attitudes, decision-making and behaviour with respect to the threat and use of force? As an illustration, if one were discussing traditional Russian/Soviet strategic culture, one would probably identify the following characteristics as the basis for discussion: a traditional sense of insecurity, overinsurance in military terms, the domination of decision-making by military professionals, traditionalist attitudes to deterrence and defence (eg 'attack is the best form of defence'), society-wide respect for the armed forces, a tendency to equate respect and fear in international politics, a history of seeing power in crude material terms (as in the equating of security with military strength) etc. This is one possible snapshot of the traditional strategic culture of Russia/the Soviet Union. We would like a similar profile for each country in the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time we would like you to speculate on the following question: to what extent are the generalisations that constitute the strategic culture based on myths which have been manipulated by historians and politicians?

CONTEMPORARY STRATEGIC POLICY

In this section we want a discussion of the country's attitude(s) and policies towards a number of major contemporary issues. Insofar as it is possible, and we know that this may be difficult, we would like you to draw causal links between the traditional strategic culture identified earlier and contemporary policy-making and behaviour. If the links seem tenuous or non-existent, then say so: it is no part of this project to make more of strategic culture than the evidence allows. So, if there is evidence which goes counter to the idea of links, please say so. These are the areas we would like everybody to try to discuss, or at least mention, within the constraints of space:

1. Nuclear strategy

What are the characteristics of the country's attitude(s) and policies towards nuclear war, nuclear deterrence, limited war and escalation, strategic defence and nuclear blackmail and coercion? We would like brief comments on 'nuclear strategy', even for countries which do not have nuclear weapons themselves (after all, all countries are targetable). Does strategic culture affect attitudes towards nuclear matters?

2. Conventional strategy

Is there anything distinctive about the country's attitude(s) and policies towards conventional military strategy? What have been the main characteristics of the doctrines of its armed forces? Where, how and why has force been used? What generalisations can be made about strategy in war, the threat of force (Schelling's 'diplomacy of violence') and military intervention? Has there been any thinking about non-offensive defence?

3. Disarmament and arms control

What has been the country's position (as expressed by officials and public opinion) on the major questions of disarmament and arms control? Has the country taken any initiatives? Is the government content to follow others on these matters? Has there been a 'peace movement'? Has any serious thought gone into confidence-building in the region?

4. Unconventional strategy

Does the country have any distinctive attitudes or policies with respect to revolutionary strategies, guerrilla war, or terrorism? What are the origins of these attitudes?

5. Independence/Interdependence

Does the country believe it can best look after its security interests on its own? What is its attitude to associates and alliances? Has there been any thinking about 'common security'? Is the future seen in a unilateral or multilateral framework?

6. Security

How is security conceived - in a narrow military sense or in a broader sense (as in 'comprehensive security')? If there is a comprehensive concept of security (as opposed to seeing defence and security synonymously) is this related to the strategic culture? How has the comprehensive concept been put into practice?

7. Defence decision-making

Who makes decisions on strategic matters? What is the relative influence of the different services? Is there a distinctive 'military' as opposed to 'civilian' set of attitudes on defence? What role does public opinion play? What is the status of the military in society? How do economic factors impinge on defence thinking? Is there a significant defence industry and lobby? How influential are interest groups in shaping defence policy?

8. The new strategic environment

How has the country reacted to the post-Cold War strategic environment? Can these attitudes and policies be related to traditional patterns of thinking and behaviour? Has any 'new thinking' on security taken place (comparable with Gorbachev's strategic cultural revolution in the mid-1980s)?

9. Strategic culture, society and identity

This is a difficult matter to pin down, but one that may lead to some interesting speculation. Ole Waever and his colleagues have recently argued that at least in Europe in the years ahead the security question will be less concerned with the traditional problem - defending the sovereignty of the state against military threats - than with the emerging problem of defending the identity of a society against a range of threats (economic, cultural etc). This is in the book Identity, Migration And The New Security Agenda in Europe (London: Pinter, 1993). Does this argument resonate in the Asia-Pacific region? Within particular countries are there different national, ethnic, religious or other identities which have different security outlooks and priorities than the decision-making elite? Are there significant divisions in the country? What role does strategic

culture play in internal conflicts? Do external enemies play an important part in the country's or society's cohesion and identity? How important are symbolic/historical military events (like 'Dunkirk' for the British or 'Leningrad' for the Soviets) in the attempt to create national (and other) identities? Is strategic culture itself an important element of nation-building and national consciousness?

This internal dimension of strategic culture is not one that has been explored anywhere, as far as we know, but it clearly can be significant (note the strategic culture of the Serbs, and its effect on what has happened in former Yugoslavia). The attempt to bring 'culture' into international politics in general, including strategic studies, has in part been a reaction against the simplicities of so-called realism. But there is a danger when talking about 'a country's strategic culture' of committing one of the sins of realism, namely the reification of the unified actor - giving a country's culture a coherence that is not matched by reality. We want to open up 'state', 'society' and 'culture', and not 'blackbox' any of them.

CHANGE AND PEACE

1. The sources of change

If it is possible to talk about a country's distinctive strategic culture is it also possible to identify change over time? If there has been change, why? (Have changes been the result of external shocks or internal evolution?) In particular, to what extent have strategic cultures changed because of the growth or advent of democratic or communist ideologies? At time of great change (domestic upheavals, technological revolutions, international events etc) are the developments looked at through the lenses of strategic culture, or is there an attempt to look at new problems in new ways? Speculation about change might

be interesting in terms of the future prospects of conflict resolution in the region.

2. The prospects for peace

Questions of peace and conflict resolution have not been addressed by students of strategic culture, or even of strategic studies as a whole. One of the contributions of this project, we hope, will be to encourage a convergence of thinking on these matters. If possible, we would therefore like some comments about the country's traditional attitude(s) to non-military means of promoting security (economic integration, multilateral diplomacy etc). Is anybody in the country (officials, universities, research institutes) thinking about conflict resolution as an approach to security as opposed to military defence? If so, who is supporting such thinking? What are the prospects of key groups within the country reconceiving security away from traditional assumptions (emphasising state security, military strength and the preservation of the status quo) to 'new thinking' emphasising common security, a comprehensive approach, and change (interdependence, transparency, integration, multilateralism etc)?

CONCLUSION

In terms of the project as a whole it would be helpful if the Conclusion could address two issues:

1. Strategic Culture

Does the study of the country's attitudes and behaviour in the security field support the concept of strategic culture (has there been a pattern of attitudes and behaviour in relation to the threat and use of force which transcends mere policy)? Or have governments through history simply been responding according to some universal strategic logic, or the pulling and pushing of domestic politics? Is the spread of modern technology pushing us to increasingly homogenised strategic cultures?

2. Peace and Conflict Resolution

Is there any prospect of the country's strategic culture being adapted, changed, used etc. to promote the delegitimisation of force in international politics? Are traditional strategic cultures compatible with peace? What are the prospects for transforming national strategic cultures into an international (regional) culture of conflict resolution and peace?